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DAGHDHA — FRAMEMAKERS SERIES

A collection of essays from a diverse group of thinkers, many leaders in their own fields, exploring the notion of choreography as the art and aesthetics of change. Established practitioners re-imagine their own fields, i.e. theology, social dreaming and organizational change, ethics, community building as choreographic endeavours. Meanwhile philosophers and cultural theorists lay out new ground on which this contemporary notion of choreography can be predicated, or situate this artistic initiative in a global political and ecological context, while bringing a critical eye to bear on perceptual and conceptual deficits in the framing and reality-making procedures of the dominant rational-scientific worldview. Finally, a number of genuinely ground-breaking essays actively produce possible applications of this aesthetic refinement of cybernetics into choreography, producing supple articulations of a new vision of governance. Including original poems and artworks, this is a unique, stimulating and super-disciplinary publication.



ISBN 978-0-9558585-1-2

framemakers — choreography as an aesthetics of change

# framemakers

# choreography as an aesthetics of change

MICHAEL KIEN, STEVE VALK, JEFFREY GORMLY  
MILTON AYLOE, LAWREN BALE, BASTA! YOUTH COLLECTIVE  
DANIEL BLAEUER, NOEL CHARLTON, MARY FOX  
PETER HARRIES-JONES, NOELEEN HARTIGAN, DYLAN HASKINS  
CAROLINE HEINRICH, GEORG IVANOVAS, W. GORDON LAWRENCE  
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*Choreograph (v.): to arrange relations between bodies  
in time and space*

*Choreography (v.): act of framing relations between bodies;  
“a way of seeing the world”*

*Choreography (n.): result of any of these actions*

*Choreography (n.): a dynamic constellation of any kind,  
consciously created or not, self-organising or super-imposed*

*Choreography (n.): order observed . . . , exchange of forces;  
a process that has an observable or observed embodied order*

*Choreograph (v.): to recognize such an order*

*Choreography (v.): act of interfering with or negotiating  
such an order*





Published in 2008 by  
Daghdha Dance Company Ltd, 1 John's Square, Limerick, Ireland  
[www.daghdha.ie](http://www.daghdha.ie)

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Design and typeset by Rafal Kosakowski ([www.reya-d.com](http://www.reya-d.com))  
Printed by Typo Druck Sares GmbH ([www.sares.at](http://www.sares.at))

This publication is supported by  
the Arts Council, an Chomhairle Ealaíon

*Framemakers — Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change* is an ongoing series of projects enquiring into a world understood in terms of relations, order and ecologies. *Framemakers* is hosted by Daghdha Dance Company, Limerick, Ireland (2005–2008).

*Framemakers — Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change* is initiated by Daghdha Dance Company, in association with the Project Arts Centre (Dublin) and in partnership with the Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies (University of Limerick), the Irish Peace Society, the Limerick City Council, the Garvey Resource Centre Limerick, nervousystem, Network Village, Glue Factory, Soul Gun Warriors, Basta! Youth Collective, MA in Dance and Performance (University of Limerick), the Sculpture and Combined Media Course at L.S.A.D., CityArts (Dublin), the Interaction Design Centre (University of Limerick), Interface (School of Art and Design, University of Ulster), the Kiesler Foundation (Austria) and the Dublin Fringe Festival.

*Framemakers — Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change* is supported by the Arts Council, an Chomhairle Ealaíon, Fáilte Ireland, the Limerick City Council and the Austrian Embassy in Ireland.

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ISBN 978-0-9558585-1-2







# introduction one

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*I believe that action, if it is to be planned at all, must always be planned upon an aesthetic base.*

Gregory Bateson

*Framemakers* is an ongoing enquiry into a world understood in terms of relations, order, and ecologies.

Daghda Dance Company hosts a new kind of thinking space, one that invites citizens to enquire into the deeper structures and dynamics that bind our worlds, in which we have our being, together. *Framemakers* poses questions of how we move and are moved; how our assumptions frame our perception of “the way things are”; how we know what we think we know and organise bodies of knowledge to impose our rights, wrongs, needs and desires on our environment; how we can and do imaginatively order and re-order aspects of our personal, social, cultural and political lives.

*Framemakers* expands a metaphor: “Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change”; a new understanding of choreography as a creative act setting humans, actions, ideas, and





thoughts in relation to one another, to create or reveal order, channel energies, explore dynamics and create conditions for something to happen.

*Framemakers* is a new perceptual space where pattern emerges, a new thought in an ecology of minds, a growing body of knowledge about a multi/inter/intra-disciplinary pattern language.

*Framemakers* is a symposium, a series of social choreographies, a theatre congress, a thinktank, a new kind of performative speaking, a raw thinking circle, a social dreaming matrix, a collection of interviews, and now a book of recommendations.

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These essays represent our own steps to an ecology of mind. All the writers here volunteer to move in a new way, with dance in mind, in an attempt to articulate and embody a new way of doing thinking, through these metaphors of choreography as an aesthetics of change, and dance as a metaphor for thought. Hovering behind, and above, the spirit of Gregory Bateson, to whom some of these papers are addressed, who moved, step by step, his own and science's consciousness towards an ecology of mind, towards "a regenerative ecology of ideas".

This is our contribution to that regenerative ecology of ideas: bodies of thought animated with a spirit of dance. Our cultivation of ecological thinking is naturally and necessarily a polyphony, a series of directions to take, a collection of individual performances taking place in one facilitative space, an expanded notion of possibility, a philosophy of generosity and hospitality, an economics of flexibility, an ecology of mind, and we hope only that your own mind be and become flexible, gracious and hospitable enough to dance, over time, with these writings.



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# introduction two

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*. . . the subject matter of the new dance orientations . . . is about a change in understanding of reality, . . . new deep ecological ethics where the philosophical horizon is formed by the shared participation in being-in-the-world.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

Change is inevitable in our climate, literally and metaphorically. There is a hardly a being on this planet that isn't aware of accelerated change, of acceleration and change. At this speed, maybe only a dancer can negotiate their way. *Framemakers* is about exploring (exploiting) an open metaphor ("Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change") in order to learn not how to manage change, but how to survive and support change; to be change. How to develop an art of change, a fundamental embodiment of a fundamental fact of life: that change is inevitable.

LISA: Dad did you know that in Chinese pictography, the same symbol means both crisis and opportunity?

HOMER: Yes! Crisatunity!

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Perhaps only a dance company could take it upon themselves to live and learn inside a social system with the implications of that ultimately personal ethic: a body of people committed to a practice of social sculpture, staking the practice of their own professional, public, civic, institutional lives as *materia prima*.

Perhaps only a mind with “dance” at centre of its attention, as core aspiration, could think to leap into a moment of crisis and finding challenges of gravity, flexibility, and intuition, hope to contain them, carry them, dance them, with something approaching grace.

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A work practice that allows me to be human.  
An art(s) that allows us to be humans.  
(Who is us? . . . We mean society)  
A people’s science, an ethic of social living.  
An art of time and punctuation.  
Think time (add your own punctuation)

*For we now recognize the nature of our disease. What is wrong with us is precisely the detachment of these forms of experience — art, religion and the rest — from one another; and our cure can only be their reunion in a complete and individual life. Our task is to seek for that life, to build up the conception of an activity which is at once art, and religion, and science, and the rest.*

R. G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis*









# davide terlingo

## the choreography of changes

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Where are our boundaries, how far can we change the world around us and how easily can we change ourselves? How deeply can we comprehend the dynamic processes of change and what tools can we develop to expand our actions and knowledge? Being human is inevitably connected with natural forms of limitations, natural because embedded in nature; a nature that, when detached from anthropocentric views, simply “is”, and whose functions manifest a consistency transcending any simplification of human reasoning. However such consistency is to be found within the human limits too, a type of consistency that reflects the workings of nature making them closer to our understanding and experience.

Some of these limitations are dictated by the laws of physics and, consequently, by the physio/biology defining our physical essence. Through them our bodies become clearly recognisable entities and acquire a unique physiognomy filling a (de)limited space whose visible boundaries coincide with a layer of skin. Here is where our physical bodies end, where the “I” becomes the “else” and where the internal becomes external. Therefore the boundary is a limitation but, at the same time, it is an essential trait of our being, it defines who we are.

Other limitations seem to extend beyond material factuality — intended and perceived as a natural order pre-existing in the physical phenomenology. These appear as a different sort of limitation, closely linked with the nature of being human, the nature of the subject seen as a unique psychological and cultural identity: not what is touched but what is felt, not the perceived but the perception, not the form but the idea. Examples of this kind are any type of social, moral, religious or intellectual restrictions, beliefs and definitions — other essential aspects defining who we are.

These mental limits of the subject (of the “I”) are important in defining the extended essence of an individual human being. Extended because it is seen as a complement to the original nucleus that defines us in our physical bodies. At the same time, the mental life is not simply overlaid onto the body; the two permeate each other in a fluid manner. Thought is not only conditioned by matter, it also reshapes the nature and relations of

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the objects with which it interacts. Every thought is a body: within these limits we find possibilities; they are the patterns that help us to find our place in the world and interact with it. This amazing ability is the expression of the human freedom to choose, which, along with the knowledge of its own consequences, determines the essence of human will.

However, as mentioned before, nature cannot be entirely revealed to us. In this dynamic exchange between mental and physical realities, at times we are brought to a deadlock, a closed circle of influences, a structural looping. Through our choices we gradually converge toward patterns from which it is then difficult to move. Observing history this seems to be a common re-occurrence, almost as if the object-subject ought to meet in pre-existing points of attraction, or as if their convergence created points of attraction in which the human patterns stabilise in a state of unresponsive stasis.

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Here is where a view of choreography as proposed in *Framemakers* shows its utility: in becoming a tool of understanding and change, in reinventing relations to destabilise sedimentary stagnation. Those are the bases onto which we can create a new form of applied choreography, a choreography that reveals the continuity between our thoughts, our actions and the world around us: a choreography of changes.





# jeffrey gornly mind is a muscle

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- May I advise you, sir, that you will do well to find another community which allows such latitude in behaviour and belief as this one. If your mind is pregnant with great schemes of thought, if you have a new science to research, a new religion or philosophy to bear into the world, here and now is the time and space for it. If you have none as yet, perhaps you will allow me to elaborate on our own science, which I have been practicing with some like minds in a small way here.
- I am always interested in the original thinking of any man.
- That does you credit, Mr. Collins, great credit indeed. Physically speaking, Mr. Collins, our body is the home of many organs: the heart is a muscular organ which pumps oxygenated blood around the body; the lungs are muscular organs which absorb into our body the aforementioned oxygen into the bloodstream. You will agree, at least, that these organs benefit not a little from vigorous and regular exercise: a brisk walk, a sharp game of tennis, a pleasant bathing excursion or a dance night. Similarly, our brain is a muscular organ, which through the medium of electrical activity controls the conscious and unconscious workings of the body, and supports the incomparable miracle that is the human mind. We believe that the brain, too, benefits by regular exercise: learning, some artistic pursuits — painting or the composition of poetry, musical appreciation, puzzles, problem solving. Can I take it we agree thus far?
- You can.
- And I think we will agree on the next point also which has become one of the commonalties of modern discourse: that the average human being utilizes in their lifetime only some eight per cent of the potential of the brain given him or her. You concur?
- I have no blind faith in this truism, but I will not disagree that the human mind is the great undiscovered country, and that our mental abilities show the potential for extraordinary growth.
- Bravo sirrah! We are of a like disposition. It is this disposition towards the development of the mental potential of the human experience that has led me to the formulation

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and practice of a Science and Philosophy of **Flexistentialism**.

- Flex-istentialism, flexi-stentialism . . . I like that.
- Flexistentialism. The ring of familiarity will, I hope, enable me to introduce the subject to every mind in the world eventually. Ours is a philosophy of possibility, sir, and our guiding principle is very simple: we believe that if one is to hold in the mind a collection of thoughts or ideas, fact, fiction or the bastard sons thereof, uploaded, so to speak, into the brain in such a manner as to potentiate the creation of connecting threads between these ideas, even though the brain strains under the weight of these improbable theses, even if credibility is stretched even to the very limit and beyond, even if the person fails to hold the extremities of all these ideas in their own mind at once, given time the mind will stretch, the mind will become flexible, and then regardless of the ultimate validity of the ideas that were the subject of the exercise, the mind will have increased its capacity to hold unrelated notions at once, and its ability to balance ideas in the brain and judge their relations. As I have said, it is not necessary that these ideas are scientific truths, but that they exist as possibilities. Through my own practice I have come to believe there is only fiction, and that it is all true. We must cut the association lines of Word and Image (that's uncle bill william burroughs) to destabilise common sense and rescue meaning for our own actions, our own speeches, our own lives. We must create and project newly imagineered realities onto the surface of our own experience, to dislodge the rigid structures of programmed thought. Remember, the mind is a muscle — flexercise it. It is only by expanding the realm of the possible that the actual will take shape.
- It is in our imagination, then, that revolution will take place.
- Not revolution, mate. Evolution. You will join one of our meetings? We will make you very welcome. Do you like entertainments?
- Yes very much.
- We have entertainments at all our meetings . . . stimulating, provocative. We are inspired by art to shift laterally in our mental cogitation. It adds another shift of gear . . . I think a hundred times more clearly, frame of reference flexible, laterally connecting ideas, i even internally . . . I arrange them on a structure like to a topography in space-time, fold the landscape at will, making creases to to make . . .

From *Quadrade* by Jeffrey Gormly





# michael klien, steve valk choreography as an aesthetics of change

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*One of the interesting things that happens is that if you look at your hand and consider it not as a number of bananas on the end of a sort of flexible stick, but if you consider it as “a nest of relations” out there . . . you will find that the object looks much prettier than you thought it looked. Part of the discovery of the beauty of a biological form is the discovery that it is put together of relations and not put together of parts. This means that with a correction of our epistemology, you might find the world was a great deal more beautiful than you thought it was. Or you might let in the fact of its being beauty in a way that you were able to keep it out by thinking that the world was made of parts and wholes.*

Gregory Bateson, *On Epistemology*, 1970

MICHAEL KLIEN:

## **A Statement**

Choreography has become a metaphor for dynamic constellations of any kind, consciously choreographed or not, self-organizing or artificially constructed. It has become a metaphor for order, intrinsically embodied by self-organizing systems as observed in the biological world or superimposed by a human creator. If the world is approached as a reality constructed of interactions, relationships, constellations and proportionalities, then choreography is seen as the aesthetic practice of setting those relations or setting the conditions for those relations to emerge. Choreographic knowledge gained in the field of dance or harvested from perceived patterns in nature should be transferable to other realms of life. The choreographer, at the centre of his art, deals with patterns and structures within the context of an existing, larger, ongoing choreography of physical, mental and social structures, whereby he/she acts as a strategist negotiating intended change within his/her environment.

As an aesthetics . . . a sensitive knowing . . . the discipline of choreography can be applied to inquire into the dance of life, effortlessly merging observation, theoretical

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writing and philosophy with practical rigor and personal expression to create works of art. The stage becomes a laboratory for the governing and steering of existing mind-dynamics and processes whether physically expressed such as a human body or a flower . . . or not . . . such as evolution or learning. Applying the aesthetics of choreography as a purposeful, creative and pro-active tool upon the surface of reality, embodies a healthy disregard for established boundaries which have arisen in fields of human knowledge production such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, education, religion, biology and history. “Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change” engages everyone’s perception and knowledge of “how things move”, inquiring if and how individuals can imaginatively order and re-order aspects of their personal, social, cultural and political lives. It examines the role of choreographer as one of . . . an active agent of change . . . within an ever-changing environment.

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STEVE VALK: The perspective you have offered . . . choreography as “a pattern language” . . . represents a paradigm shift in thinking about this historical category of dance creation . . . bringing it very close to something like “a mode of being” in the world, the choreographer as “an architect of a fluid environment he himself is a part of”. If there has been such a profound shift in the conceptual underpinning of this notion of “choreography”, does this word or concept still have meaning? Is it a useful term and why?

MICHAEL KLIEN: When we first moved into our new premises, St. John’s Church, we decided to stop what we were doing and really look deeply and carefully at our practice. We initiated a public thinktank called *Framemakers*, examining choreography and dance outside of their traditional cultural frameworks, exposing these artistic disciplines to other fields of human understanding, to areas of wider concern. We invited theologians, politicians, scientists, cyberneticists, psychologists, organizational relations specialists, etc. to entertain the idea and discuss the notion of “Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change”. Who choreographs what in society? Who . . . if anyone . . . is constructing these frames and who is living by them. What unfolding rule-based choreography is at work in the DNA of emerging lifeforms? What composes or choreographs the symphonic complexity of human lovemaking? Working under the simple and boldly naive assumption that the “theatrical stage” is a part of life as such, and that the strategies developed there have a wider relevance, including the ordering of the social sphere, the *Framemakers* project began asking questions of how things are ordered and which frames are created for movement to take place. The term “choreography” was transposed to the field of human

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





relations, as a way of seeing the world, an art of interaction and interference with . . . an art of traversing . . . the everyday governance of relations and dynamics, expressed in physical movement or ideas.

### **Systemic Adjustment**

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For me, there is simply no other or better word or concept than “choreography” to describe the active inquiry into the non-concrete, or “super-sensible” reality of complex relations and connections within the natural world. Many fields of human inquiry deal with elements in a specialized reductionist manner, but alas there is, as yet, really no field or “surface” onto which we can map the “unfathomably complex” experiences and phenomena we are only able to apprehend aesthetically, kinesthetically, intuitively, and that, until now, have only been conceived of in terms of symbolic expression.

STEVE VALK: The theoretical biologist Walter M. Elsasser in his book *Reflections on a Theory of Organisms* talks about a complexity in nature that is “transcomputational”, where the behaviour of living organisms cannot be reduced to physico-chemical causality. (Elsasser, 1987: 4) He comes to biology from the field of quantum physics and has proposed the notion of “creativity” as a scientifically admissible concept. Elsasser sees creativity as a concept required in all reproduction of organisms and a “going over point” between quantum-theoretical-thinking and the more widely practiced mechanistic-biological thought.

### **Free Floating Attention**

MICHAEL KLIEN: The word “choreography” extends the possibility of understanding and posing questions about the nature of the creative act within living systems. These days choreography has become associated with ordering processes, however the philosophical inquiries into order from chaos theory to complexity theory and cybernetics invite us to rethink the very notion of order as something non-linear/unfixed and far beyond our ability to measure or control. Choreography is not to constrain movement into a set pattern, it is to provide a cradle for movement to find its own patterns . . . over and over again . . . to prevent a body . . . whether bound by skin or habits . . . from stagnation, and enable that lightness, primal energy and elemental possibility only to be found once relations start dancing.



## Organism and Environment

*What is called for in and by the democracy to come is the unconditional gift, which does not seek a return on one's investment, the gift in which the self gives up its power, the power of the "I can", the power of the possible, which is what constitutes a self. What we have asked of the king, we now must ask of ourselves; to give up power, to share and divide it. What is called for is a self that shares its power in a gift without return. What is called for is unconditional hospitality to the other, to the stranger and the immigrant . . . What is called for is a transforming and transfixing revolution in which the self turns itself inside out and lets itself be claimed by the other.*

John D. Caputo, *Without Sovereignty, Without Being: Unconditionality, the Coming God and Derrida's Democracy to Come*

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STEVE VALK: Lying next to me on the desk here is a magazine called *Art Review* and this issue's cover story is entitled *Environmental: Can Art Save the Planet?* When I showed it to you, you groaned and when I look inside it seems like the world of an alien mind. What is the difference between what you and I have just been talking about and that which seems to be happening in the world of "contemporary art", in the world of "contemporary dance"?

MICHAEL KLIEN: It must have something to do with closed self-referential loops that are at work when a system, in this case "contemporary art", is validating its own existence. Such loops, when fed by their own history and concepts, develop a condition known as "infinite nesting". Safety zones are created in which, in this case, people and ideas can stay to avoid confronting the outside. Western Art has unfortunately engaged in a devil's bargain in which it received "ivory tower" status in return for staying away from the materialistic and functionalistic way the world is understood, organized and acted upon. This self-legitimizing and comfortable-status-situation has cost contemporary art and culture all its credibility. Therefore, in times of crisis and challenge art and culture remain completely marginalized. "Can Art Save the Planet?" Not in a million years!!! Not unless this "nest" or protected zone begins to address the issues humanity is facing from a more inclusive, self-effacing, "wider" perspective. Not unless it can give up its power, its constituting "I can" . . . as John D. Caputo says, unconditionally. When Derrida speaks about the political act being "the settings of artificial relations between people", how can the choreographer, who does exactly that for a living, retreat into a studio and



practice his or her “politics” in front of a mirror. It doesn’t make sense. I feel that there is a real lack of critical, and by that I mean “transformative”, evaluation of the role of art outside its own historical context. This then leads to a closing of the information loop and the propagation of status quos, of conceptual “safety zones”: theaters, orchestras, dance companies, galleries, festivals, exhibitions, etc.

The director of one of Germany’s most important museums told me recently, in total seriousness, that statistically only twelve per cent of the population participate in the arts. He accepted that as a given fact, and allocated his marketing funds, designed his publicity and advertising strategies in accordance with that “reality”.

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*The Fiji Islanders say, “We don’t have art.  
We just try to do everything as well as possible.”*

Marshall McLuhan, *The Global Village*, p. 86

STEVE VALK: The image of the Balinese ceremony comes to mind. This sense of full immersion, involvement, participation, etc. of everyone present. Half the performers breaking out in trance, some people out-of-control, trying to hurt themselves, etc. audience members diving on top of them, others standing and watching. Amidst all of this . . . the priests setting up their ritual space. In our present-day culture this kind of spontaneous, ungoverned behaviour only happens during real catastrophes, floods, earthquakes, or storms. It is sad to think that it always takes a real catastrophe to reconnect people to themselves and their environment.

MICHAEL KLIEN: “Contemporary Art and Culture” seem powerless to make an effect in the present day situation. They do not play a transformative role in society . . . in the creation of new social forms, laws, etc. despite the critical situations most societies are facing. You will hear talk of the end of western hegemony, the need for profound shifts in environmental awareness, “peak oil” and the catastrophic depletion of energy resources, of the demise of functioning democracy, etc. but in all that discussion you will not hear a word about art or culture as an aid or a resource in coping with the oncoming tidal wave of global uncertainty. As someone deeply committed to a belief in the potential of human creativity, this is a painful and sobering reality. There is a schism, a disconnect that prevents *co-relationen* or “Correalism” as Kiesler calls it. Art and Culture seem unable to respond affirmatively, courageously, to the demands, the complexities, to the richness of the contemporary situation. I think we are in desperate need of new language, new



understandings of a new “surface” on which to map the relationship between consciousness and aesthetics.

*The whole of our thinking about what we are and what other people are has got to be re-structured. This is not funny, and I do not know how long we have to do it in. If we continue to operate on the premises that were fashionable during the Pre-Cybernetic era, and which were especially underlined during the Industrial Revolution, which seemed to validate the Darwinian unit of survival, we may have twenty or thirty years before the logical reductio ad absurdum of our old positions destroys us. Nobody knows how long we have, under the present system, before some disaster strikes us, more serious than the destruction of any group of nations. The most important task today is, perhaps, to learn to think in a new way.*

Gregory Bateson, *About Bateson*<sup>1)</sup>

STEVE VALK: Out of a growing awareness of the ever-widening gap between “the way man thinks and the way nature works”, choreography, traditionally understood as “the art of movement in time and space”, has found itself being drawn away from “the ideal world” of the stage. At the same time it has been driven to undergo a re-examination of its conceptual language and explanatory systems. Choreography has moved beyond the architecture of its stationary historical universe and has emerged as an embodied act of a human consciousness no longer separate from, but embedded within, the irreducible, unfathomably complex ordering system of the biological world.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1)</sup> <http://www.global-vision.org/bateson.html>, accessed March 2007.



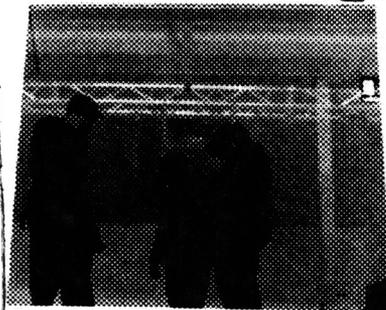
# basta! youth collective once you are free

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ONCE YOU ARE FREE.

-words dancing to "Once Beneath the Skin"

Let go. Allow your unconscious instincts to  
Control your movements.  
Inhale.  
At one with yourself and your environment.  
You can move through obstacles.  
Twist and bend.  
Catapult yourself into a world where you are  
Choreographer and dancer and spectator to  
Your own life.



Let go. Release your energy.  
Inhale.  
Jump  
And  
Jump  
And  
Jump

Where does the piece conclude? Never.  
Climax succeeded by climax into a world where  
we are all dancers free from collision.

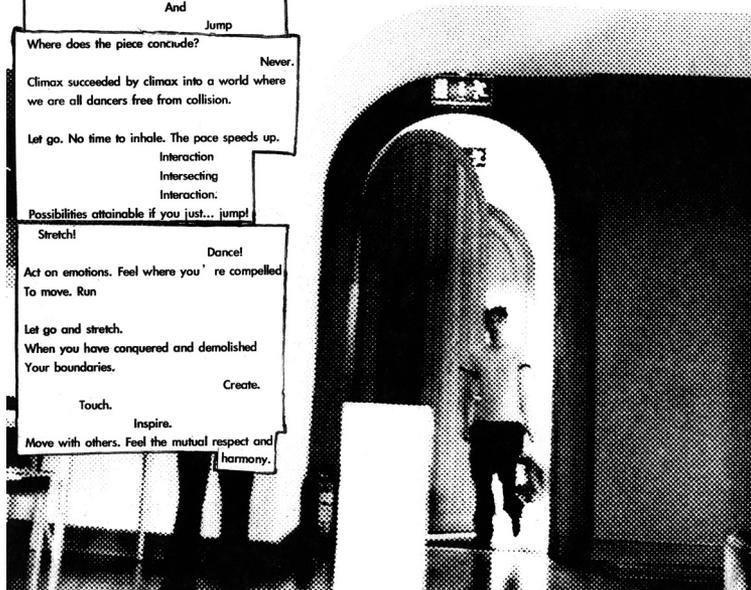
Let go. No time to inhale. The pace speeds up.  
Interaction  
Intersecting  
Interaction.

Possibilities attainable if you just... jump!

Stretch! Dancel  
Act on emotions. Feel where you're compelled  
To move. Run

Let go and stretch.  
When you have conquered and demolished  
Your boundaries.

Touch. Create.  
Inspire.  
Move with others. Feel the mutual respect and  
harmony.



FRAMEMAKERS





# peter harries-jones gregory bateson's spirited culture of refusal

One of my teaching tasks in university has been to present a course on social advocacy, discussing the differences between advocacy in countries politically adverse to human rights, and in countries where human rights advocacy was normal procedure but where the effect of all social dissent was filtered through the media. Here, I could always draw upon examples of mainstream media publishing calls by activists for public resistance, doing their duty in reporting the news, but doing so in contexts suggesting that the activists and their movement were on the fringe of society. As new social movements grew in appeal and in numbers, so did media attempts to marginalize their message.

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It was therefore with some surprise that I picked up *Harpers Magazine* recently, a journal that has been impeccably mainstream in North American media for a very long time, and read an extensive article entitled, *The Spirit of Disobedience: An Invitation to Resistance*. (White, 2006: 39, 40) It concluded:

*Although the 1960s counterculture has been much maligned and discredited, it attempted to provide what we still desperately need: a spirited culture of refusal, a counter life to the reigning corporate culture of death. We do not need to return to that counterculture but we do need to take up its challenge again. (We need to forcefully remind ourselves and others that) If the work we do produces mostly bad, ugly and destructive things, those things in turn will tend to recreate us in their image.*

White, 2006: 40

In one sense, a challenge to the “corporate culture of death” could be considered mainstream dissent. After all, it was a theme of the late Pope, John Paul. Yet this particular article was no religious tract and adopted an unusual intellectual position. It suggested that North America is a culture in which death has taken refuge in legalities; in particular, all the legalities of property rights “condemns nature itself to violation even as we support the freedom to pursue personal happiness and prosperity through the use of private property”. The author proposed a “counter-enlightenment” in the western world, the

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





development of a third option in our intellectual traditions, one that is hostile to the orthodoxies of institutional Christianity yet, at the same time, remains suspicious of the claims of Reason — especially the sort of economic rationalism that defines modern day capitalism. Unusually he suggested that this counter-enlightenment follow in the footsteps of the English radical poet and artist William Blake. From Blake's point of view both religion and Reason (Newton's Ratio) were deeply antihuman and destructive and Blake believed that humanity needed to develop its sense of imagination. In this article, a developed sense of human imagination is at the root of the author's "third option".

The article caught my attention because for the last twenty years I have been pondering a profound supporter of Blake's ideas, namely Gregory Bateson. Bateson also proposed an approach to modern day science reminiscent of Blake's "third option". Bateson found himself a hero of those who supported the spirited culture of refusal in the 1960s. He achieved his greatest prominence as an intellectual in the heady days of mid-1960s California, and his readers looked upon his writing as a source of sufficient intellectual weight on a range of topics — communication, mind, nature and culture — to challenge the orthodoxies of the times. The major difference between him and many other followers of the Blakean tradition was that Bateson knew only too well that Blake's line of thinking could lead to its own excesses. Despite personal friendship with well-known people within the counter-culture, he had little time either for New Age spiritualism or the intellectual pretensions of social utopianism among the "drop out" generation. As for the drug scene he was perhaps more open to young people's experimentation than many of his colleagues, but objected to drug use as a solution to political or social issues. He believed that the effects of drugs on human imagination were ephemeral. He remained, however, a rigorous explorer of human imagination, of the wider awareness that imagination brings, and of the necessity for incorporating a creative aesthetic into decadent utilitarianism so pervasive in modern day natural and social sciences.

Bateson was already a distinguished academic in the immediate aftermath of World War Two and engaged in a social activist opposition to the development and use of atomic weapons. He had sure knowledge that atomic weaponry had changed the position of science in relation to human aspirations. He recognized that science, once the repository of human hopes, had produced the ultimate monster. Human annihilation was now a possibility through the use of a relatively cheap technology. The use of science for annihilation did not stop with the atomic bomb. Physics, chemistry and biology were all directing their efforts towards even cheaper technologies of mass destruction, and the governments of the time strongly encouraged production of technology in support of



mass destruction. “Weapons of mass destruction” is by no means a newly coined term. Bateson recognized in the 1940s that utilitarian science, once oriented towards continual production of “new tricks”, increasingly endangered human existence.

From the mid-1960s, he turned towards ecology as did several other scientists and threw in his intellectual lot with the newly minted environmental movement. Bateson saw his task as elaborating upon the presence of a “whole” in ecology, a notion that was already in the public imagination, courtesy of the astronauts who had begun to take photographs of the earth on their respective missions to the moon. What Bateson added to this visual perception was that the “whole” would inevitably react to a reckless transform of its parts in a very quick order of time. Varied parts of local ecosystem connectivity would engage in a new set of dynamics in relation to its self-organization. This is a way of saying that integrated systems of life would become degraded on a planetary scale through runaway effects unless there was a radical re-consideration of invasive aspects of human activity on planetary ecology. Bateson’s guesstimate was that this would occur in thirty years, that is, in the 1990s — a very accurate prognostication since global warming, which he also anticipated, became a matter of public concern at that time.

He believed that the problem confronting society was to undertake an unprecedented leap of human imagination by imagining the characteristics of an ecological whole in the absence of exact scientific knowledge about holism. A corollary was to begin to understand how changing ecological dynamics were affected by human activity. This was a whole new field of enquiry. It could not evolve from human understanding of industrial science. In fact, science itself had to discard much of its presuppositions derived from the mechanics of industrial order and engage in entirely new methodologies. Cognitively, science had to come to terms with principles of cybernetics, of non-linear systems in general, and to devise ways and means of rigorous study of indeterminacy in non-linear events. Meanwhile people, the public, had to understand ecological wholes and their patterns of interconnection, not only the “external” dimensions of change in these patterns and how these would affect them in future time, but also the feedback links to their own patterns of behaviour, and how, at a second order level, their own understanding of their own activity would affect this patterning. This was a very difficult message to convey, for mainstream science and its intellectual counterparts in the humanities had always maintained that environmental events on a large scale were completely independent of human activity.

Bateson used the term “epistemology” to characterize this exercise of human imagination about how the relationship of people to their environment entered into the dynamics

of environmental change. Yet it was not until the convention on global climate change in 1997 (the Kyoto Accord), 17 years after his death, that this epistemology became acceptable. Until then Bateson remained a marginalized figure and his understanding of the conditions under which human adaptation occurs, i.e. a co-evolutionary process at a second-order level was not considered to be a premise of either science nor “reason”.

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Bateson also makes the case that there is an information or communicative order among all living things and that without this communicative order coordinating energy components, gene flow and nutrient cycling, the cycle of life could never occur. Fortunately, his assertion about the presence of a communicative order has led to understanding in recent years that there is an unexplored “semiosphere”. (Hoffmeyer, 1996) The semiosphere may best be described as a realm of ecological *interpretation* of significant events by living organisms themselves that science has largely ignored or refused to consider. Nevertheless, mainstream natural science still considers this sort of thinking as an exercise in “mysticism” and continues to observe activity in nature through two main perspectives. The first perspective is that nature is robotic in its response to available bioenergy; the second is that reproductive activity in nature flows in a determinist manner from a blueprint — DNA. The latter was the whole rationale behind the Human Genome Project. Since Darwin — Darwin himself was ambivalent on this issue — mainstream science rebuts all thought that nature has intelligence, intelligence that flows from the activities of inherent sensing organs.<sup>1)</sup> It is still heresy in modern science to propose that natural activity undertakes “subjective selection” or communicates through activities which we would call “meaningful” in the human world. In mainstream science the cognitive differences between humanity on the one hand and the rest of the living world on the other is taken to be fundamental. Any acknowledgement that there is *interpretation* among living organisms, supposedly confuses the relation between scientific objectivity and subjectivity, and therefore, cannot be accepted. I have been told by reputable botanists who write about communicative intelligence in plants that the mere suggestion that plants “select” activities results in editors of major scientific journals requiring them to withdraw such implications from their research findings if they wish them to be published.

As the influence of the counter-culture of the 1960s subsided, so did the influence of Bateson’s own writing. My own personal commitment to Bateson’s writing is in one sense an attempt to induce further reflection upon his work. In another sense, I support the spirit of resistance embodied in the counter-culture of which he was an unwilling spokesperson. I am no erstwhile “hippy” nor do I frame my imaginations in Californian terms, even though I was a California resident for a brief time in my youth. I went to UCLA

for a year and played soccer for the university but my fantasy of California disappeared in the smog of the mid-1950s. Since I am a decade older than the “hippy” generation my own fights for civil rights had little North American content. They occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s in southern Africa. My main claim to fame in this youthful period was helping prevent a civil war in Zambia at the fragile time of its independence. My engagement in all this was purely fortuitous, somewhat in keeping with the hero of the comic novel *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh. No one was more surprised than I was to see these events subsequently recognized in historical accounts of that period.

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At the same time, I am a passionate believer that a change of ecological perspective has to alter the corporate culture of death<sup>2</sup>) — and the way in which the science supporting corporate culture mistreats nature. Fortunately, the last six months or so has produced a major change of perspective. The western industrial nations are beginning to be concerned about their own future and it would seem that since the corporate culture of death can no longer be denied, it is, therefore, no longer marginal. Previously, the critics of science in the humanities, the post-modernists of the 1980s, were never interested in ecology. The post-modernists of the 1980s were so determined to prove that there were no historical meta-narratives to account for the human condition, that they failed to examine the most dangerous meta-narrative of all: the belief that nature remains a never ending resource to be transformed for human purposes in as many ways as the combination of capitalism and technology can be efficiently put into practice.

Bateson was one of the proponents of a cybernetic epistemology, but it was another proponent of cybernetic epistemology, James Lovelock, who became the most celebrated in this field. He has suggested that nature is more responsive than we imagine and because of its non-linear circularities (*recursions*) can indeed undertake “revenge”. (Lovelock, 2006) In brief, he argues, we face a runaway climate of “unrestrained heat”, a condition that cannot be controlled and one which has been brought about by gross physical changes in ecosystems in many areas. In previous writing Lovelock laid out how our living planet creates physical conditions which, within flexible boundaries of biotic response, are conducive to the *recursive* maintenance of physical conditions supporting life. For this reason, Lovelock called our planet by the name of Gaia, a Greek goddess, and discussed Gaia as being a single superorganism. Like others I believe that while his identification of the capacity of global biota to create conditions for its own continued existence is correct, Lovelock’s designation of Gaia as superorganism is mistaken. Though I owe much to Lovelock for my understanding of *recursion*, my understanding of nature as intelligent and the part that intelligence plays in recursive activity is drawn from Bateson rather than



Lovelock. Following Bateson, I believe that not only do we require a regenerative ecology in a physical sense but we also need a regenerative ecology of ideas to support such a regenerative ecology. Recognition of the intelligence of nature, and nature as a field of meaning in which human beings are participants, are key propositions for a regenerative ecology of ideas. To repeat: humanity is not free to draw sustenance from nature in any way our intellect imagines. As Bateson pointed out: “There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself.” (Bateson, 1973: 494) There are clearly wrong turns that can be made in the human imagination. Rebuttal of an ecology of bad ideas requires a new set of premises. Nature is alive, it senses; its complex interlinkage of living organisms, and of the biotic with the a-biotic, always ensures that natural activity is *recursive*.<sup>3)</sup>

Fortunately there is a Bateson legacy. Biosemiotics has arisen to provide a counter to the prevailing conceptions of inertness and reductionism in physically oriented sciences. Biosemiotics proposes that it is the sign and not the organic molecule that is the basic unit of life, a position which runs against a total belief in the materialist order of the living universe which pervades the natural sciences. Like Bateson, those engaged in the construction of Biosemiotics argue that a communicative, sign-oriented, study of life will fundamentally enlarge self-understanding of ourselves as human beings in relation to nature, and correct the prevailing narrow vision. The semiosphere (see above) is today easily traced in animal interaction, in primate interaction and in other non-human interaction such as whales and dolphins, in bees and insects. Bateson’s own writing has prompted some of these studies but it would be inaccurate to suggest that all those in Biosemiotics follow Bateson’s lead. Nevertheless, in the last two or three years there has been a number of studies of plant-plant interactions implicating the presence of communication. Among novel questions arising are, is it possible to consider that plants, like animals, have a neurological system? Do they respond to context, as Bateson suggested? As suggested above his intellectual stimulus is also significant in problematic areas such as the Human Genome Project’s portrayal of genetic determinism.

Bateson was a choreographer of ideas. He recognized that whatever the merit of his case for reform of science, it would have to be supported by art, poetry, parables and stories if it were to appeal to human imagination. I have often wondered, especially since meeting with *Framemakers*, how a choreography of Bateson’s ideas, drawn from his own life, could itself be presented as a sort of parable to be staged or danced. For example as a young anthropologist in Bali, Bateson investigated how the people on Bali danced their ideas. After his Bali research, he maintained an interest in “proprioception” or the way in



which bodily movement forms and alters sensibility, and ideas about sensibility. In his Bali study he argues that the highly segmented movements of Bali dance corresponded to forms of segmentation in Bali social organization.

This is in keeping with looking at proprioception as coordinated with social interaction, that is to say there is a proprioceptive process by which bodily action becomes embodied or translated from “other” (i.e. the social rules of communicative interaction) to “self”. Bali is a very complex culture whose description and analysis has defied a number of anthropological investigations over the years. Incorporated within the cultural setting of Bali is a form of Hinduism that has its origin in Tantric Buddhism, so effects of religious belief on life is central to its culture.

The people of Bali, as Bateson and others have pointed out, have obsessive concerns with “balance” in their culture. Members of that culture feel an overwhelming need to surround themselves with happiness and harmony. Yet their compelling concerns to be good to others does not relieve them of a pervasive anxiety they have that others may do evil to you; and in a culture which believes both in “balance” and in the actual presence of demons and demonic power, these anxieties can give rise to a sense of threat to their personal lives by the fear that others will engage demons to harm them.

The Bali scenarios can be compared with an opposite theme in the Western world, that of imbalance. The setting here is registered in a scientific vision which promises affluence and improvement of the human condition but whose vision of this progress with respect to environment is very narrow indeed. In respect of proprioception, the coordination of environmental possibility with human bodily awareness of its surround is disjoint; “other” is separate from “self”.

The scenario illustrating this would be an incident which the newspapers called “the death of Lake Erie”. This occurred in 1969 when the Cuyahoga River caught on fire. The river, which runs through Cleveland, Ohio, into Lake Erie, had caught on fire eight or nine times in the previous century. But in 1969 the fire on the Cuyahoga River occurred at approximately the same time as uncontrolled pollution from sewage and agricultural phosphates created a situation in which fish no longer had oxygen (eutrophication), and the mayfly population of the lake was also decimated.

Bateson's take on “the death of Lake Erie” was as startling as it was abrupt. Instead of highlighting the physical interactions of oil pollution, dead timber and sparks from trains that lead to a seeming combustion of the river, or resort to mythological metaphors for these events, Bateson speaks of an eco-mental system being driven insane: You decide that you want to get rid of the by-products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a

good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is part of your wider eco-mental system — and that if Lake Erie is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated in the larger system of your thought and experience. (Bateson, 1973: 484)

If residents around the lake did not grasp the implication of ignoring the larger ecological system, elsewhere the response to the “insanity” was more dramatic. “The death of Lake Erie” became a rallying cry for the first Earth Day of April 1970, and on many subsequent Earth Days, the story of Lake Erie catching fire has been retold, each time becoming its own parable of how, in the environmental sense, “everything is connected to everything else”.

The insanity derived from imbalance between human affluence and human effluence has continued to affect Lake Erie. Recent surveys have uncovered a reduction in human male sperm counts around the great lakes of as much as 50 per cent. This is attributed to the presence of estrogen which shows up in water either through sewage waste or through birth control pills flushed down toilets or sinks. Humans who drink the water are not immune. Once in the waste water fed through to the rivers and the lake, estrogen clearly affects sperm quality. The most bizarre encounter with how “everything is connected to everything else” concern male fish, white perch. The male perch have developed female organs. Studies conducted by a Canadian scientist in 2002 show that white perch caught for research had male and female sex organs, and a second study showed that male snapping turtles had traces of estrogen. There are other results flowing from feminization of wildlife, sometimes benign, some which have lead to pathogenic cancers. The high content of estrogen is not only a result of human waste; it also results from absorption of plastics in the waters of Lake Erie. Recent research indicates that plastics absorbed into water mimic estrogen in their effects on humans and fish. (Colborn, Dumanoski and Myers, 1996)

Bateson related unhealthy ecological conditions to an imbalance between mind and body. Overall the singular beauty of water in Lake Erie has turned into ugliness many times more dangerous than the demons of Bali. It is the saddest aspect of a dance begun by bad ideas, the bad ideas of Reason. As many other writers have pointed out since, the Western world cannot indefinitely avoid recognizing that healthy ecological conditions create so many of our human capabilities necessary for human agency. “Being ecological” includes a dimension necessarily tied to being in a healthy relationship with the natural world. (Bendik-Keymer, 2006: 38) Currently the residents of Cleveland, Ohio, like the rest of the population of the United States, are concerned about severe obesity

among themselves and their children — an imbalance that is shortening their life despite increasing affluence. This is an existential dilemma they can no longer avoid.

REFERENCES

- 1) Biology and other natural sciences rest their analysis on impersonal mechanisms, and the most celebrated impersonal mechanism cited to constrain or enable nature, is natural selection. Though Charles Darwin, the progenitor of this idea, meant the term "natural selection" to be a metaphor, whose context he imagined to be well understood before he introduced it, natural selection has been interpreted subsequently as a deterministic force in nature.
- 2) One example of the corporate culture of death will have to suffice, the Commission for Environmental Co-operation (CEC). This organization was set up as a sidebar to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the early 1990s to meet fears that a trade bloc between the United States, Canada and Mexico would gut environmental rules in order to let Mexico, in particular, produce goods within a price range which would compete with developing countries. The CEC's executive director admits that none of the governments concerned wanted it and it was simply "a price to pay" for getting NAFTA accepted. Thus, the CEC, by its own admission, has never done any work on climate change, even though the NAFTA bloc is the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter. On the other hand, it has done work on the risks posed to Mexico by the importation of genetically modified corn. Keeping "white maize" free from genetic modification is absolutely crucial to the population of the southern provinces of Mexico because white corn is their subsistence crop; furthermore organic white corn by-products are their major source of internal and export revenue. Against all advice from the world's leading agricultural scientists who recommended a prudential approach to the issue, the CEC accepted the U. S. position that this advice was "fundamentally flawed and unscientific". (*The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, July 27, 2006 A7) The U. S. is the chief exporter of industrial yellow corn products, genetically modified, to Mexico and relentlessly pursues exportation of yellow corn products into Mexico. Meanwhile, introducing genetically modified corn globally is another step towards industrial monoculture, drastically reducing the flexibilities of seed variety and dramatically increasing chances of famine through crop failure.
- 3) For a fuller discussion of recursion see my book on Bateson.



# lawren bale stochasticisms

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Message is Neither  
Lost nor Hidden

Only On Occasion  
Grasped  
but briefly  
like quicksilver  
frozen

Briefly  
the fires of life  
that light in our gut

Perceived  
but just  
outside the spheres

of sense and vision

FRAMEMAKERS





# kirsi monni

## about the sense and meaning in dance

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In this article I will present some of the dance-ontological themes I explored in my research and artistic dissertation (2004).<sup>1)</sup> In it I wanted to question the fundamentals that underlie our way of thinking about dance art. I asked what kind of notions on art, truth and bodily being contemporary dance in all its forms represents. To be able to deal with these questions I found that my practical experience as professional dance artist was not enough but that I had to also dig deep into the cognitive history of Western art and bodily existence. The horizon for this investigation couldn't be only the art of dance or dance as a separate aesthetic field. Wider perspectives of bodily being-in-the-world and the philosophical knowledge of it were needed. Therefore I based my questions of dance-ontology on *fundamental ontology*, foremost in the thinking of Martin Heidegger.<sup>2)</sup> My own research was mainly focused on the new orientations of dance which stem from the 1960s and 1970s, but in order to reveal the “new”, the “old” perspectives have to be articulated as well. In this case, the “old” refers to the traditional classical dance aesthetics. In the following, I bring forth some of the notions that underlie our Western conceptions of truth and reality; the metaphysical thinking that, according to Heidegger, our tradition of aesthetics is historically based on. Subsequently, I describe how the philosophy of existence in the 1900s has affected the emerging of the new paradigmatic orientations in dance of the 20th century.

### **About Art, Truth and Aesthetics in the History of Western Thought**

The first part of my research is a dive into the thinking of Martin Heidegger.<sup>3)</sup> In it I present his interpretation of the intertwining of metaphysics and aesthetics and discuss his proposal for an un-aesthetic mode of viewing art. Heidegger attempts to bring forth a new way of thinking about art in which it is not only considered to be a matter of aesthetic experience but also understood in relation to a disclosure of truth. In Heidegger's analysis this notion is closely affiliated with the conception of the nature of truth in Western thought.

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Heidegger asks how metaphysics has pushed us to encounter reality, and he answers that it has done so in such a way that our involvement in the mutual ground of being has been forgotten.

Heidegger argues that the tradition of aesthetics relies upon platonic metaphysics in which reality is revealed to us through the distinction between the supra-sensible (ideal) and sensible (material) realms. The truth is found from the supra-sensible realm of permanent ideas, from which sensible matter is only a shadow. This is the metaphysical ground which continued to inform the conceptual model of artworks throughout Western history: an artwork is formed matter which allows the supra-sensible to shine through it; an artwork imitates reality, which is revealed through conception of the right idea; an artwork is a symbol, an allegory, a metaphor, a representation. (Heidegger, 1991, 15–16, 24–26; Luoto, 2002, 45–47)

Heidegger unravels this basically mimetic way of understanding art while he simultaneously rethinks the history of Western metaphysics. Heidegger does not approach art as a vehicle for representing the contents of the supra-sensible but considers it a prime opening-up of a world or a disclosure of reality. With this position the Greek term *techne* becomes important to him. *Techne* denotes a human mode of knowing through which human beings draw *phusis* (being, the prevalent) to disclose a world — a significant and meaningful circuit of openness. (Heidegger, 1991, 62)

Heidegger believes art to be this kind of erecting of a world and a field of disclosure of a new reality, which does not concern the truth of beings but the unconcealedness of being's "beingness". The unconcealedness of being can never be the mere conceiving of the right idea, never sheer disclosedness. It involves the fathomless concealment, the secretive withdrawal of the not-yet-uncovered. What metaphysics has forgotten, according to Heidegger, is the opening of reality as a disclosure, which contains that from which it occurs — the undisclosed. (Heidegger, 1991, 55–57)

Since Heidegger thinks of art as this kind of a place for the happening of prime unconcealedness, he also emphasizes that an artwork is not a representation of something previously disclosed. It is only in the artwork itself that what at the moment comes-to-present springs forth. An artwork does not imitate reality. Instead, the figure, the *Gestalt*, of the artwork with its earth-world structure wrests and brings forth the happening of the disclosedness of being set-into-work in the work itself.

If the essence of art and the ontology of an artwork were to be seen in this way, it means also that an artwork could be seen as neither a plain aesthetic object nor a sheer initiator of aesthetic experience. Rather, it offers for the community of peoples a possibility to



participate in the unconcealedness of being and disclosure of the world which is taking place in the artwork. (Heidegger, 1991, 65–66, 71, 75–76; Luoto, 2002, 190–197)

### About the Paradigm of Dance Aesthetics

In the second part of my thesis I examine and analyze the kinds of preconceptions aesthetics has offered dance art as well as the kinds of preconceptions “the metaphysics of subjectivity” has offered for the understanding of bodily being.<sup>4</sup>) I illuminate how within the aesthetic tradition and during the so-called era of the foundational Cartesian attitude it has been “natural” to conceive of the human body as aesthetically mouldable matter and a dance work as a scenic and symbolic performance as the aesthetic conceptual model of artworks has implied.

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What is important to notice is that according to the old Platonist metaphysics, in the realm of true reality, e.g. of supra-sensible, of pure ideas, there is no actual lived time, no actual lived place, no real life situation, no mortality; the ideal truth of what is, is timeless and permanent. And how does this affect dance?

For dance it means that the dancer’s body has been seen as a representation of the ideal or striving towards it. “Body” has not been reflecting my individual situated consciousness. Neither has “the body” been seen as a terrain for mutual kinetic-*logos* and the historical world to express its self. Rather a dancer’s body has been seen as a tool (or instrument) for representing a general idea (through ideal body, one amongst many alike). In the ideal world there is no otherness or difference; there is only sameness, the totality of the right idea. A dancer’s body has been seen as mouldable matter for a movement sculptor to shape according to the timeless, permanent and general idea. (From this point of view it can be understood why geometrical ideas and forms — which are “permanent and true” mathematical ideas in spatial dimensions — have been such obligatory obvious ways of conceiving, constructing and understanding choreography.)

Within this perspective, the skills of an artist have been considered to be in close affiliation with the techniques of *production*. Accordingly, a choreographer’s skills have been understood as the ability to shape movement and organize moving bodies in space and time to create an aesthetically constructed form, a movement composition, utilizing the motional body as material. A dancer’s skills have been understood as the ability to produce movement-material and to be “a perfect tool”, an interpreting instrument for the movement sculptor to work with. In my research I discussed how the dancer’s and choreographer’s skills have traditionally been understood basically from this approach

which the tradition of aesthetics — developed basically from the 2000 year-old Western metaphysics — has offered for dance.

Dance-art has often been generally defined as “movement in time and space”. How is then the relationship to *time* and *space* understood in the dance aesthetic tradition? If “the moving body” is primarily seen as material for movement composition — which draws its construction regulations from a “mathematical realm” — it can happen that “the body’s” own situated *being* is concealed or absent. In other words the “body’s” own lived temporality, situatedness and therefore its own sense for factual being is in a way absent. Following this the *lived* and *limited time of human existence* has been rather concealed while *time* has been something like a neutral *calculable element* of a dance work; time and space are *used* as elements of a dance composition. Time is seen as *kronos*, constant existence, which is structured into calculable, metric values. Time and space are considered to be neutral elements to be used and filled.

The sense of choreography is thus not *grounded* on the notion that the world reveals itself to us only as a temporal and spatial event, but this factuality is concealed. To simplify, the creation of a choreographic *Gestalt* is understood mainly as a craft (of forming material). A choreographer’s aim is not considered to find a primary relationship to the unconcealedness of *existence*, but rather to form a representation of somewhat previously known ideas.

### Some Remarks of the Philosophical Grounds in New Dance Orientations

After addressing the above issues, I present the new paradigmatic orientation of dance, which has been greatly influential during the last decades and has deviated from the aesthetic tradition. In it “the body” is not considered first and foremost to be mouldable matter but a manner of the happening of individual existence. Further, “the body” is also seen as a terrain, where the kinetic laws of motion, and the belonging to the mutual ground of existence, can shine forth with the help of dancer’s *techné*: his/her bodily knowledge.

I combine this new way of conceiving the body and dance, with on the one hand, Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, the philosophy of existence and phenomenology, and on the other hand, with the Asian bodily traditions of wisdom. I believe the latter also to have strongly influenced the evolvement of the new paradigm of dance and the new ways of understanding a dancer’s skills. In all of those influences mentioned above the basic need to confront and comprehend reality can be seen, not from the metaphysical

separation of higher, true reality of supra-sensible idea and lower realm of sensible matter, but from the *situated bodily existence* in the midst of the world. In the point of situated-bodily-existence one cannot eventually separate matter and spirit, body and intellect without executing the life. By focusing on the situated existence of every creature one confronts the world in different ways than by confronting the world mainly as objects for knowledge, material and a reserve fund for humans to use.

So according to my interpretation, the subject matter of the new dance orientations — which developed together with the changes in the 20th century philosophy — is about much more than just a change from one dance aesthetic to another, or just the introduction of “soft” body techniques and unique bodyliness. It is about a change in understanding of reality, as described above, and therefore it has also laid a demand and possibility to develop new ways of understanding of dance, choreography and dancer’s skill. Thus, it has also brought the important philosophical discourse, the critique of “metaphysics of subjectivity”, into dance. This critique has also brought about new *deep ecological ethics* where the philosophical horizon is formed by the shared participation in being-in-the-world.

### Dance-Ontological Orientation

The new paradigmatic orientation in dance-art has developed during the whole 20th century, partaking in the breakdown of the so-called Cartesian metaphysics. In my view, it culminated though in an illuminating way in the American postmodern dance in 1960s and 1970s and is still developing both artistically and theoretically, parallel and intertwined with the older dance-aesthetic tradition.

According to my interpretation, in the new paradigm the foundations for the meaningfulness of dance-art is not primarily looked for in aesthetically formed movements but in the manner in which dance sets up the disclosedness of existence as bodily consciousness, conscious motion. “The body” is not mainly viewed as material for representation of supra-sensible themes or ideas, but it is also understood that an individual’s perceptive action and conscious movement in itself, is a unique way of thinking and therefore possesses a power for disclosure of reality.

Rather than the dancer attempting to construct a performance that is about the world, she or he receives and reveals being. The dancer draws from the dynamic kinetics of *phusis*, that is, the *happening* of being, which he or she is unveiling, shining forth. Dance does not utilize space, time, and form like some objectified material but discloses

being's temporal and spatial happening, a kinetic-*logos*, the bodily involvement in being, interpreted through a historically situated world. Therefore, a dancer's skill cannot be understood merely as a technique of production, but as bodily knowledge, which is about generating disclosedness.

Thus this new dance orientation and ancient thinking shake hands. In the dawn of Western philosophy, Herakleitos was quoted criticizing the self-understanding of man: "Although the *logos* is common to all, most people live as if they had a wisdom of their own." (Herakleitos/Eliott, 1966, 1) As I interpret this quote, I understand that the question of meaningfulness in dance cannot be separated from a wider horizon. The question of how do we inhabit our common world should in dance be based on our mutual ground of historically situated-bodily-existence and the kinetic-*logos* of being. To work that out, to interpret that in every dance-work's unique *Gestalt*, the dancer's skills need to be understood as *techne*, as bodily knowledge, as bodily consciousness.

### Dancer's *Techne* and the Poetic Movement of Being

In my understanding, dancer's skills in new dance orientations are understood more as *techne* and less as body-technical ability. *Techne* is grounded on the practice of bodily awareness. It can be outlined as a research of the body's functional intelligence: the understanding and practice of kinetic-body-*logos*. (Asking questions such as how a person moves, what sense and reason guides it?) *Techne* as bodily knowledge is also a research into how the movement possesses power for disclosing of the historical world. It can be described as the ability to listen and perceive the lived body experience and bodily memory. Thirdly I include to dancer's *techne* the practice of certain non-reacting and non-acting, which brings the dancer away from conventional body instrumentalism to functionally perceptive, unique here-moment and body-mind integrity.

*Here-moment* means two intertwining things. Firstly, it is the instant presence in our bodily existence, here and now. Secondly, it means presence in *here-world*, in the realm of sense and meaning; the historical (societal, political, economical, cultural) *situation* of the person, with factual existential boundaries and possibilities.

A dancer's bodily knowledge is the ability to stay within the immediate and instantaneous "here-in-the-situation" moment, in the integrity of the body-mind, in which the instrumental and habitual everyday way of conceiving of the body is released into revealing the non-concealed, poetic manner of being. Strength and speed, which inherently includes rest, waiting and quietness — movement which includes its opposite

— is uncaptured and undefined. Uncaptured and undefined, yet aware and meaningful — this quality opens up the relationship between man and being as it is: we are thrown in-the-midst-of being-towards-death and being-with-others in the historical world. It has no solid foundation, and is therefore an undefined, “empty” mystery.

This quality provides dance the task of *remembering of* and *opening upon* our existential situatedness. Remembering the being-in-the-world as poetry, i.e. art, discloses existence. As such, it is political and awakening, an excess of existence and a gift.

Therefore, dance does not get signified only as a representation of something previously revealed, nor as a mere aesthetic experience. Rather it can be comprehended as *laying out a world* in its involvement with being. It is *ekstasis*: stepping out of attachment to the prevalent and already signified contemporaneousness into the openness and potentiality of the self and being. It breaks chronological time and radically opens the *situation* in a “chairotic”, instantaneous moment where the signifying of the world happens as bodily poetry, poetic motion.

In this way practising dance can be understood as a place for exploring bodily consciousness. In turn, a choreographic process can be understood as a place where kinetic being and the remembrance of our existential situatedness are interpreted through a setting-up of an art work as a *Gestalt*.

When dance is approached from this perspective, the quality or interestingness of dance is not defined by whether it is “understandable” — if understanding means that dance gives an accurate and unambiguous representation of reality or that dance displays a skillful and thus understandable execution of movement. What if the intent of dance is not to imitate reality “understandably”, and what if its value and significance is not *based* on virtuous movement ability in itself? What if the intent is to show that existence is *simultaneously* both understandable and unexplainable, a disclosed sensibility and concealed mystery? Movement can never be thoroughly explained, it cannot be mastered by informational knowledge, if it is a way of taking command, of concealing the strangeness of being or objectifying and manipulating the existing.

### A Small “Manifesto”

Above, I have described how the bodily perception of time and space is disclosing the unique happening of time and space, how it is its *manifestation* in bodily movement. One should not forget that temporality is not separate from human existence, it is not something that a dancing person could use, spend, count, repeat or show. Therefore, in

dance, there is nothing separate from the unconcealedness of existence that one could find a technique for to reveal. Dance does not create or use time, but perhaps receives and donates it by revealing our existence as an event of unique happening of limited time. Dance does not create or use space but discloses it as a meaningful place-situation. Dance poses the question of how our bodily inhabiting *in time* and *place* comes into being. Dance surpasses the unhistorical and objectified existence. It does not freeze the flux of reality into a represented movement (which would be posing), nor does it forget being (which would be objectifying). It does not diligently conduct a building project of the world, but rather stops mechanical building and begins a poetic living — a hearing and sharing the common being-in-the-world with the creatures of the world.

## REFERENCES

- 1) The dissertation has been published in Finnish by the Theatre Academy of Finland, 2004. Headline translated: *Poetic Movement of Being. Philosophical Interpretations of the New Paradigm of Dance in the Light of Martin Heidegger's Thinking and the Artistic Work in Years 1996–1999* and the appendix *Alexander-Technique and Authentic Movement. Two Methods for Practicing Bodily-Knowledge*.
- 2) My research incorporates phenomenology-orientated dance research and existential philosophy, mainly Martin Heidegger's thinking. I utilize some of the terminology of previous dance research, e.g. Maxine-Sheets Johnstone's term *kinetic-body-logos* and the term *thinking-in-movement* from Alexander-Technique (may be first used by John Dewey in the 1930s). Another important concept is that of *techné* — central to Heidegger in his philosophical considerations on art — which philosopher Jaana Parviainen has brought up in dance research context. Philosopher Timo Klemola's research of Asian bodily wisdom-traditions and the philosophy of skill have brought up notions of *bodily knowledge* and the descriptions of *contemplative bodily experience* which became important tools in my own analysis of dancer's skill. For Heidegger art is as an ontological question that deals with the disclosure of truth of being. In my research I examined danceworks and dancer's skill in reference to this "disclosure of truth", following Heidegger's ontology and not as a question of aesthetics at all. By doing so I brought the philosophy of Heidegger into the discourse of dance ontology slightly further than previous dance research.
- 3) The most important writings of Heidegger have been *Six Basic Developments in the History of Aesthetics* (orig. *Sechs Grundtatsachen aus der Geschichte der Ästhetik*, in *Nietzsche I–II*, 1961), *Taideteoksen alkuperä* (orig. *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, 1935/36) and *Oleminen ja aika* (orig. *Sein und Zeit*, 1927). Important Heidegger interpretations and art philosophical considerations have been by philosopher Miika Luoto's *Heidegger ja taiteen arvoitus (Heidegger and the Enigma of Art)*, Tutkijaliitto, 2002, and philosopher Reijo Kupiainen's *Heideggerin ja Nietzschen taidekäsitysten jäljillä (After Heidegger's and Nietzsche's Concepts of Art)*, Gaudeamus, 1997.
- 4) "Metaphysics of subjectivity" is Heidegger's interpretation of the disclosure of reality in the new era: it draws upon Platonist metaphysics, culminating first in Descartes' thinking and in the subsequent era. The term is an ontological definition of prevailing metaphysics where reality is disclosed in the light of certain and permanent knowledge by the knowing subject, always in a representational structure. (see, e.g. Heidegger, 2000b, 22–27; Luoto, 2002, 68–69)



# milton aylor

## a theology of the dance

Presented at *Framemakers — Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*,  
May 30–June 6, 2005

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### I

Dancing is what we should want not only our feet to do, but also our thoughts. Let us be interested in thinking in a dancing way — dancing thoughts — turning and twisting and leaping in our thinking. Let's begin with leaping — taking leaps, jumps in our thinking. Not how do I get from here to there, but rather, being here, I act there through projection, through imagination. I jump, I leap, from here to there and thus I am still here but now from there to where I have jumped in my projection, in my act of imagination. Why is it so difficult for us to overcome the physical fixation of place through the act of imagination in which we jump to another place from which we then look back to where we still are really? To imagine being somewhere else is to qualify where you are, to place the given now in relativizing relationship to the wanted or risked not-yet of our projection where we can and do imagine ourselves actually being. Without doing this in some way there is no sympathy, no empathy, no solidarity, no being loved and thus no appreciation and lastly no joy. We jump in our thinking all the time really; we just don't think about it very much. We turn and twist in the same way in our thinking, so thinking is a kind of dance anyway.

Theology is the study of God and in this time, which we call postmodern, it is a most demanding discipline indeed, because the whole of metaphysics in which classical theology is conjugated has become a structure of being composed of metaphors, of open symbols requiring energetic participation. To believe is a creative act; it is the creative act. There is belief only when you or I believe, but our act of believing is only possible because there is already a pattern, a literature, series of steps and postures called liturgy, a daring called prophecy and a priestly presence of mediation and listening love in forms

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of confession and healing hope. Words in which we wait and want are the language-world of worship. Theology itself has become a dance. Theology is pattern, steps, leaps, twirls and twists — a danced circle defining a middle and midst around which we dance in worship, surrounding the one before whom we wish to be, surrounding that one with our circling attention.

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The thrill of vitality is the reason for dance; we dance to feel life, to know and celebrate our aliveness. The planned and performed pattern which is dance is also liturgy and the performative language of preaching. Dancing theology fits the situation of postmodern total subjectivity just fine. We think in jumps and speak in steps. When we think of dance as performed poetry, we come close to the inner meaning of ritual as that lifebasis which makes community-creating communication possible. It is, however, the case that all these things like liturgy and ritual serve the status-quo and we meet here to think and talk about change. There is this feeling that some, indeed many, of us have that something is slowly and quietly taking shape amongst us in myriad little ways. A new synthesis, a fervent vision, a subtle swipe at the triumphant arrogances of our time — an ecology of encouragement and encounter. The meeting of minds and sharing of appreciative inadequacies brings strangers together to gather well-meant impressions into conversations about doing things differently, quite literally for a change. Change is essential to vitality and growth; change is also the honesty of limited life, of mortality. Is it because we ourselves cannot help but change, that we resist change in our circumstances, so as to at least in them to have the illusion of permanence? There may be, however, a more basic reason for our reluctance to embrace change, namely our realization that what is important to us depends on us. What happens to our projects, our worlds, when we dare to do things differently? Can this not be a kind of treason, a kind of betrayal? For those on whom worlds depend it is risky, even costly to just do it differently for the sake of intriguing but insecure heuristics. Quite a different perspective is possible if one is of the opinion or even of the intimation that something new is emerging. Is this not the possibility and moral mandate for an aesthetics of change? Something new, qualitatively new, not just novel, emerging from the encounter of various insights and experiences, the vague outlines of a pattern, the feeling of common forms of perception in the solidarity of frustration and postponement. Newness seems to hover over us, an ungraspable horizon promising a comprehension we can still only guess at and long for. We want an ecology that is a house, an *oikos* to live in, to be safe in, a place of light and warmth, a place to dance.





Once in our history, it was pedagogic practice to portray the dance of death. We are here to think about the dance of life and to do that in a way which enables an ecology of encouragement and encounter as the comforting context of thinking about change as aligning ourselves with the emerging ecology. Emergence becomes visible when the outline of the pattern can be seen. Prophets are seers; they see what is coming before others do. This seeing, which is prophecy, is theory, the vision which organizes the facts. Embracing a new vision does not entail denying or neglecting facts, on the contrary! The aesthetics of change can mean that which is manifest in change or that which is wrought through such aesthetics. The aesthetic dimensions of change are attributes of change, but the change wrought through aesthetics is something quite different. The aesthetics with which we are dealing here are those which are attributes of the emerging ecology, but then they are also aspects of the dynamics through which the change in question is effected. The dance not only celebrates what is happening; it also thereby produces what is to be celebrated, namely the change in question. To dance so as to make perceptible the emerging ecology is a rewarding responsibility. To watch such dancing is to win perspective.

From the theology of dance to the dance of theology is one of the ways the emerging ecology of encouragement and encounter is changing the self-understanding of our disciplines. Instead of just looking at the project, we learn to look at the projecting. God is not the doer and not the done; God is the doing. It is important to know this, so that we know what we are really saying when we say: God be with you. The dance is in the dancing, is it not? Believing as a or even the creative act is achieved through imagination as seeing so prophetically that such seeing produces proleptic effect; the vision is now. The eschatological ethics of the Apostle Paul are nothing other than this imaginative behaviour whereby one lives now on the basis of what will become clear and confirming. Dancing theology is the doing of theology as existential poetry interpreting life as willed purpose and satisfying effort. The emerging ecology is a theological perspective and proposes that the sacred has its rightful and necessary place in the political preference for secularism. That which is truly sacred is untouchable and lethal toward every vulgar attempt at possession — what then are the untouchables of the emerging ecology, what warning is there for the wary? To speak of the commandments of the emerging ecology is to consider the prohibitive aspects of that holiness or sacredness which obtains in the new ecology. Our world is broken and violated and increasingly overwhelmed and provoked into violent reaction. The new ecology is not for any pristine state of nature





or innocence of humankind, but rather for a world polluted and poisoned, a humanity brutalized and brutish. The new ecology is about redemption and restoration, about repentance and renewal. Dancing theology is about judgment and critique, about the confession of our crimes and the hope of learning our lessons. Judgment is change — redemption is change — repentance is change — hope is change. Pelagius was right on the matter of grace and not Augustine, who taught us, not only that we could not change, but even made it unnecessary. Being together here on the home turf of Celtic Christianity, let's feel close to our much maligned friend, Pelagius, and say simply: we can change and we must change and we want to change: to change from murdering the earth and misusing each other while musing about how much concrete carnage is acceptable as the price of Americanizing the world. If we can dance, we can change, because dance is change. To watch the dance is to fill our eyes with the charm and chance of change — those who dance call the world to renewal.

## II

Dance is not just entertainment — I suppose all or at least most dancers know that, but it is the common assumption of most people who watch dancing, I think. We may occasionally intuit that the dancing we see is something of an enticement to follow such observable feelings as are the stuff of some dancing, that the dancers are into something more than amusing acrobatics. The problem of how entertainment is destroying much of sensate life in the first world is rather beyond the scope of our present consideration, but it is most definitely involved in it. Dance is the description of systemic reality. Eco-systems are patterns and so are dances. The interconnectedness of steps reproduces the nexus of life. A dance is a system. Dancing can be a conscious way of reflecting upon the eco-systems which compose our world, a seeing of systems, a following of patterns. To follow a pattern is to be patterned, to become part of that pattern and so to experience oneself in interconnectedness, in rhythmic relationship or static tension. To flow within a system, to bend oneself to fit the pattern, to guide the steps which lead the body being — this is all a way of co-operating by corresponding to the patterns of reality. To dance in this sense is to ritualize reality. To do this knowingly is energy plus epistemology; it is physical understanding. Dancing can reflect the systems of reality within which and by virtue of which we live. It is only by becoming aware of the systemic nature of reality that we can escape the trap of politicizing ecology into fascism. To know you are part of something can keep you from being swept off your feet and overwhelmed by the context





of your concrete existence. To use the force of totality is exactly what totalitarianism is. To be personally not a permanent part of reality is the right of mortality and thus the freedom to be within but not belong to systemic reality. To be within reality, but to belong to God is what belief is all about, especially the mythology of creation. Our mortality can be our maturity; it is our place and prerogative of consciousness in systemic reality, in being. To be, not forever, but for now — to know this is how we are human and it is the reason for love. When we dance, we describe systemic reality, within which we are, but to which we do not belong and so we ritualize reality to respect its inescapable authority and assert our freedom, at the core of which there is no substance, but only the primal act of love. By dancing we can rehearse reality and revel in our freedom.

### III

Dance is discipline and the freer its form, the stricter its discipline. The art of dancing requires intensive and comprehensive training; it must be learned; it must be taught. *Disciplina* is the secret of all art and the finest accomplishment of thinking. When the dance reflects the systems of reality, it can only do so through adequate technique enabling the expression of eco-systems and that means the physical ability to construct channels and connections. The moving body assumes forms and develops designs of motions which are deliberate and demanding. The choreographic sketch is a map of motion and to be able to perform its requirements and suggestions takes both mental and physical competence. Belief is also composed of *disciplina*. When theologically aware and adept persons see dancing, they recognize how they believe. Reflecting systemic reality through physical expression in the learned discipline of deliberate movement and posture is dance theologically conceived and applicable to the interests of liturgy. Whether dervishes or the Shiva, swaying Hassidics or shaking puritans, gyrating Africans or ever so proper processions, the many forms of dance in the world of religion all attest to the fact that there is in the sensitivity of the sacred that moment which calls for physical expression and stimulates the thoughtful to work out and teach the patterns of piety.

Choreography is the theory of the discipline of dance. To plan the pattern, to direct the steps, to shape the motion, these are the elements of the doableness of discipline. To train the body so as to clear and concentrate the mind is the task of the training essential to dance. Dance is never an accident; it is always the deliberate act.





Just as dance is the reflection of systemic reality, it can also be the expression of sacred imagination. The configurations of dance can show the unexpected combinations of motion and posture which put us on to new ideas and into unsettledness. Dance can beckon; it can call and address secret longing. Dance can be wonderfully subversive, which makes it capable of the sacred. To turn around what cannot be touched is to encircle the sacred, to move in the eternal circle around that holy center of the unspeakable, the ineffable. The center is silence and it is empty, but it is vital; it can vibrate — it can pulse. The center of the circle is where God is. God is the center of the dancing circle.

#### IV

That dance has become a basic of meditation is well known and widely practiced. Such dance is not a matter of watching, but of dancing oneself and doing so as one not trained or talented, but just interested and willing. When I dance in the privacy of my room, with nobody, absolutely nobody else around, I do what feels right and appropriate to the feelings which I want to express and sometimes I even try something which I think will teach me some new feelings. There are lots of people, who do not really know how to dance, who do nevertheless, as best they can, often in hidden privacy. Could not such dancing be personally designed? Could not someone who does know how to dance design the personal dance of the someone who wants to dance meditatively alone? When it is true, which I think it is, that movement is important, indeed crucial, to thinking, then whether yoga or the Irish jig the dance can produce mental excitement. To move motorizes thinking. Meditative dancing is the private privilege of many people and some, perhaps most, of these people would like to do better what they do so happily, namely dance alone. Might there not be a new and needed field of coaching here? Personally, I would love to have a dancing coach who would design my personal dance and even help me make the updating changes in my dance, which would be appropriate to new insights and enabling to the development of disciplines which I need and want. Sometimes it is very important and quite difficult to make something clear to ourselves, something we need to learn, to understand, to accept, to reject or avoid and then it can be simply super to put such “making it clear to myself” into the moulding medium of dance. If a sedentary Calvinist can make this discovery, then surely anybody can. Perhaps we will not be able to learn to believe in God within our life, unless we dare to dance. The private dance of personal meditation could be an interesting development





of expanding the usefulness of dance knowledge; we could begin to experiment with a choreography of consciousness, which might even develop into the dance of conscience. My own dance — what a marvellous possibility! Who could help me? Who could design the dance I need, the dance I want and do that just for me, just so I too could dance as best as I can. A center of dance could be a place for the designing and learning of the personal dance.

## V

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It makes a lot of sense to think of co-operation as the source of consciousness, to consider co-operative interaction to be the dynamic through which human thought, in the brain and between persons, develops. If it is also the case, that only humans have rhythm, as Walter Freeman contends, then dance is a most basic form of what human consciousness is all about: co-operation and co-ordination. It is, I suppose, even possible to consider conflict to be the negative form of co-operation. While I certainly do not want in any way place the importance of private, individual dancing in question, it is obvious that this little thought-adventure we are engaged in must come to the conclusion that the dance of the group is of primary importance. It is in the dance of the group that co-operation celebrates its generative originality as the dynamic enabling of communication and community. Learning to participate in a dance, however simple, is the real basis of both personal and institutional communication competence. Getting people to do things, to behave constructively, to care, to be responsible — all this and such like are the stuff of co-operation through communication. If we need to un-learn our destructive living-habits, and we most certainly do, then we require a repatterning of our way of living, because change cannot just be piled on top of what is already there, for we must unlearn what is to be replaced through that which we want to be different. Change necessarily involves re-placement; we change one thing for another — we change from one place to another — we change our patterns and our priorities, if we really are serious about change. Change involves giving-up, getting-over, doing-away-with and going-beyond, which can also mean going-back. The neuroscientist, Walter Freeman, is convinced that consciousness springs from action, co-operation and rhythm — well, if that does not establish dance as a primal form of the genesis of consciousness, I can't imagine what might. Dancing as a way of learning and un-learning means dance as a medium of change. As a Calvinist, I find this idea both fascinating and frightening, because the Augustinian basis of the Reformation wrought an intellectualist rejection





of the role of sensuality in the matters of faith, which, while understandably emergent from Augustine's own biography and not completely congruent with Luther's earthiness did obviate the productive possibilities of sensualist liturgy. I regret this, but find it quite understandable and perhaps the historically unavoidable price that had to be paid for the development of the critical stance of the protestant perspective. As someone who is a product of puritan persuasions, I find it also to be incumbent upon me, as such a person, to be readily and informedly appreciative of the sensual basics, which seem to be finding recognition and employment today. Yoga or not, we cannot continue to despise and destroy the natural/material essential basis of our life. This is not only the convincing lesson of ecology; it is also the joyous discovery of increasing numbers of people in the first-world, that the hallowed divorce of the mental from the physical is the effective crippling of life and that there is no independent reality of the mental apart from or superior to the physical. This is what makes the project of a monistic understanding of the world so very right and necessary and here I am thinking of Gregory Bateson.

If today we are evolving theologically into a perspective of integration and prioritizing prophecy, in which God is no longer out there, but intensely within and among us, we have the interpretive task of turning our vast collection of transcendence-language into the poetry of existence. To do this, we are going to have to do more than think learnedly and speak persuasively and listen carefully, all of which is indispensable but not sufficient to the task. We are going to have to learn physical patterns which will enable us to unlearn what we want to overcome, namely our subjection of physical reality to the supposedly superior claims of abstract reason, including mathematics as the realm of eternal truth and instrument of our quantitative technological omnicompetence. The more we understand of the world to which we not only belong, but actually ourselves are, the more we are driven to the comprehension, that our bifurcated history betrays the interdependent integrity of our actual existence. It is not the case that Bateson's perspective opens the back door to the apologetic ambitions of religion, but rather, it seems to me, it is the case that a monistic understanding of reality can serve the ethical interests of religion quite well. Not pantheism, not panenthism and certainly not theism or deism, but rather theanthropology as man's rootedness in not-only physical reality.

To think, we must move in co-operative pattern-making actions, which effect change not on top of what is already there, but by replacing what is to be rejected with what is to be preferred, by un-learning to learn or because we have learned. The theology of





dance today is the dance, which is theology that is not just thinking, not just language, but embodied movement producing consciousness in and for community. It is time to dance again in Church — not just watching, but swaying yourself with the Spirit.

## VI

In conclusion, I would like to briefly consider the possibility of interpreting the Eucharist as a dance. Crossan's investigation of the origin of the Passion Narrative involves the speculative probability of the liturgical development of women's mourning rituals. Soggen's commentary work involves the hypothetical reconstruction of sacred drama. The First Testament is full of dance and among the times of man's life as recited in the Book of Ecclesiastes, dance has its honoured place and self-understood time. David and all Israel dance before the Lord and the choreography of the temple is the home-ground of various visions and dramatic depictions in the Hebrew Scriptures. The narrative form of much of scripture is rooted in ritualized recitation and this applies particularly to the Passion Narrative, including the christologized observance of Passover, which becomes the Lord's Supper and is institutionalized as sacred meal, so that the Christians also have what the mystery religions had, as Milito of Sardis makes so fascinatingly clear. We understand now a good bit about how the interpretation of Jesus' death or disappearance on the basis of the interpretation of Israel's scriptures took place, but we still are in the first stages of understanding the ritualistic beginnings of what became the Eucharist. How to celebrate the Eucharist is not a matter for official church hierarchies or bureaucracies to decide — this is already being decided by free-form ecumenical Christians in informal experimentation. In this situation, it is most appropriate to think about the possibility of celebrating the Eucharist, which has become the central ritual of ecumenical Christianity, of celebrating the Eucharist as a dance. There are already many dance elements in most forms of worship, including the passing of the peace amongst hygiene-conscious Christians who are rather reluctant to indulge in the Holy Kiss. A gentle circle of holding hands and taking a few simple steps would be quite enough for most of us, I should think. This would be a physical act into which the whole of the Eucharistic theology could be packed as a reflection of the ecology of encounter and encouragement. The Eucharist is an ecology and it could be danced. May the Lord of the dance bless us all.





# w. gordon lawrence

## choreography and creativity

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*To “choreograph” is to arrange bodies in time and space, as in a dance sequence. A wider meaning is arranging relations between such bodies. “Choreography” is the act of framing relations between bodies, as external objects or entities, and becomes a way of seeing the world. Such a dynamic constellation can be consciously created, or not, can emerge into being self-organising or super-imposed.*

The focus in this essay is on the “conscious, or not” framing of relationships. The “or not” is taken to refer to the unconscious. In particular the issue being addressed is the relationship between the unconscious mind and dreaming as a guide to, even a model of, framing, or choreographing, relationships between not only bodies and phenomena but also ideas and thought in the world of reality.

Choreography, in the broadest sense, is shaped in the mind through the unconscious and imagination. One theme of this essay is to identify the sources of imaginative thinking and framing of ideas. The theatre of dreams, while sleeping, is an unrivalled source of creativity and imagination. Dreams arise from the unconscious mind which is to be seen positively and as life-giving. W. B. Yeats’ injunction to tread softly on dreams is to be taken very seriously because dreaming, and thinking about the meaning of the dream, allows us to go “beyond the frames”. (Lawrence, 1985) Seeing the dream as a shard of creation waiting to be realized — not to be trodden on but prized — allows for creative thinking and thought to be born.

Neurobiological research since the 1990s has been pursuing the idea that the mind acts back on the brain to cause physical changes. (Begley, 2007) This morphing process can be encouraged by thinking about thinking, the unconscious mind and dreaming. By thinking about the unconscious and dreaming the processes of the mind and the brain are enhanced and sharpened, or refined, to become an effective tool for framing new understanding and insight of relations between bodies, or ideas.

Unconscious thinking takes place, as a virtual parallel universe, all the time for humans as they pursue their daily activities. It is “a particular form of thinking”, according

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to Freud (1900). The unconscious is characterized by timelessness and placelessness inducting humanity into the infinite. Symbolism it produces through displacement and condensation by the paradoxical juxtaposition of opposites. (Grotstein, 2001) This is why the subjective experience of dreaming is often bizarre, surreal, and disturbing of the taken-for-granted logic of daily life. Dream communicates to the conscious mind through visual images which are used instead of words. The messages are in the form of ideograms or symbolism and lack the exactness of written or spoken lexis. (Lopez-Corvo, 2006)

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Dreaming needs to have its cryptic messages transformed into thought, otherwise they would not be communicated. As we recount a dream we are putting it into words that, inevitably, are a lie for we are always trying to get at the truth of a dream which is unattainable. There is always a navel in a dream, “one spot in every dream that is unplumbable”, which is its “point of contact with the unknown”. (Freud, 1900) We shall never know the absolute truth but it is the effort to attain it by thinking that stretches our minds to makes us human.

*The working hypothesis is that anything creative, e.g. choreography, in the widest sense, will have its roots in the unconscious mind evinced through dreaming which is transformed into thought in consciousness. That thought is translated into action through the process of imagination resulting in dance, a poem, a painting or any work of literature or scientific discovery. Dreaming is an unconscious re-framing of the relations among objects and phenomena in the world.*

### **Further Differences Between Consciousness and the Unconscious**

The unconscious, and dreaming, makes for awareness of the irrational that is never constrained by the logic of rationality. Mark Rothko, the American painter, wrote “the irrational quality of inspiration, [the] finding between the innocence of childhood and the derangement of madness that true insight which is not accorded to normal man” (Rothko, 2004) was a source of creativity for him. Choreography becomes inventive when the irrational, the unconscious and dreaming are treated seriously, valued, and not despised, when we listen to, and pay attention to, the inner voice of our minds, both individually and collectively, causing us to reframe the world of consciousness.

“The governing rules of logic carry no weight in the unconscious; it might be called the Realm of the Illogical” wrote Freud in 1900. Pursuing this insight Ignacio Matte-





Blanco made an intellectual leap by working out the different logics used in waking consciousness and the unconscious while asleep. Consequently, the unconscious can be seen in a positive light.

While we are awake and conscious the human mind uses finite sets. (Matte-Blanco, 1975, 1988) The classic is the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic). The logic of these is indisputable and the resultant rules have allowed human kind to communicate. Finite sets are used to distinguish things and phenomena using true or false propositions. The conscious mind is always making propositions to itself about the relationship of one object to another. These are triads: self-as-subject (one), object — thing or phenomenon — (two), and the remaining (third) entity. The mind contains a vast reservoir of triads that constitute finite sets which are the basis of scientific thinking. These allow humans to carry out classificatory activities in their minds. These finite sets are deployed asymmetrical logic in consciousness.

By contrast the unconscious operates on symmetrical logic when the finite sets are relaxed through sleep and humans are temporally paralyzed. Then the infinite sets of the unconscious come to be mobilized. There are no limits to these sets which allows the person to be in infinity. Symmetric logic is used by the unconscious and all experiences are fused into a one-ness. This is the radical nature of the unconscious which is based on a totally different logic from consciousness.

Two distinctions: in consciousness the “I”, or ego, is all important because the emphasis is on the “management of the self in role”. (Lawrence, 1979) When the unconscious holds sway ego-lessness becomes the state of the individual as she submerges into the unconscious.

The other paradox is the antinomy of the conscious and unconscious. It is by internalizing this antinomy that we are human. By freeing ourselves from the chains of the rational, new vistas are opened for us as the unconscious opens new ways of examining reality to foster the development of the mind by accepting synchronicity and being alert to shadows of the future.

There is a self-organising choreography of the unconscious which will have a pattern that connects it. It is in discerning this pattern that new knowledge is made. This choreography is made possible through the way that the unconscious operates.

Whereas in consciousness the perceptual input is mathematic symbols, signs and words, in dreaming, the pure experience of the unconscious, the input is almost pure imagery. In consciousness we work with logical relationships, e.g. if A then B, but the unconscious works with almost pure picture metaphor. In consciousness the boundaries



are thick with solid division and categorization, but in the unconscious boundaries are merged, and there is a loosening of categories with thin boundaries.

In consciousness processing of ideas, etc. is relatively serial but in the unconscious these are spontaneously auto-associative, just as the sequence of ideas or images are connected in a linear fashion, e.g.  $A > B > C > D$ , but are multi-related in the unconscious.

### The Unconscious and Creativity

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Neurobiologists tell us that the bandwidth of consciousness is our ability to transmit information, measured in “bits” per second. This is much too narrow to register all the information. We process around 14 million bits of information per second as human organisms relating to our environment. (A “bit” is weightless, colourless, has no size and can travel at the speed of light. “It is the smallest atomic element in the DNA of information.” [Negroponte, 1995]) But the bandwidth of consciousness is around 18 bits. This means that we have conscious access to a small percentage (about a millionth) of the information we routinely use to survive. The vast bulk of information humans use to make decisions is captured by the unconscious mind. Therefore, as Anton Ehrenzweig found, “the undifferentiated structure of unconscious vision . . . displays scanning powers that are superior to conscious vision”. (Ehrenzweig, 1967)

We intuit the link between the unconscious and creativity. The best detailed description of the actual process comes from Einstein, reported by Matte-Blanco, on the discovery of special relativity theory. He said that words or language did not play any role in the mechanism of thought. Rather, the physical entities which act as elements of thought are certain signs and images which are more or less clear enough to be reproduced and combined. These mental images of the object of thought are emotionally manipulated independently in imagination. The emotional basis of this rather vague play is the desire to arrive at logically connected concepts. Once this play is established, Einstein goes on to describe the laborious search for words that are analogous to the logical connections implicit in the emotional play with images. Following this route, he arrives ultimately at mathematical formulations.

Einstein started from an emotional state expressed in images and sensations to arrive at a purely intellectual and highly abstract conception. In short, if emotion is the mother of invention, through the transformation of the thinking in the images, father is the unconscious. The unconscious because of its unique functioning presents new configurations of relations between objects in the environment and phenomena and also between



ideas and concepts. These new relations come from an apparently random configuration. This synchronous configuration will have a pattern that connects it. It is the thinking embedded in this pattern that has to be discerned and transformed into rational thinking and thought. This is how finite knowledge is wrested from the infinite into which the unconscious has inducted us. That pattern can be construed as a choreography leading through transformation to a different framing of the material from the unconscious.

This is the “guts” of creativity: unconscious life, novel configurations of unconscious material, e.g. dreaming, discerning the pattern that connects them, recognition of the synchronous choreography, transformation into thought, leading to new discoveries in the world of reality.

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### **Dreaming**

Dreaming as a mental activity is nature’s way of experimenting with alternative versions of reality. Dreaming has a “research” function because the mind rehearses how the human is to relate to, and with objects in, its environment. It also has a defensive “escapist” function. Both are needed for the human being to survive as an organism. “Longing for a more ideal world, a wish for a more perfect union with one’s love object, in fact a search for the paradise lost of infant love is, I think, an essential aspect of human nature.” (Sodre, 1999)

Life began with one cell organisms and the hunch is that such organisms engaged in a proto-dreaming of themselves in relation to their eco-environment so that they could “think” how to adapt to that environment and so evolve through dreaming the “bright idea”. This can only be a hunch, a guess, which, probably, never can be tested scientifically.

The hypothesis is the “bright idea” of creativity, or choreography, comes from the dream. This is difficult to accept by some people who claim it came from them and their thinking. Einstein was honest enough to admit that the bright idea came from his dreaming. For his special relativity theory he made endless calculations but the solution came in a dream “like a giant die making an indelible impress, a huge map of the universe outlined itself in one clear vision”. (Brian, 1996)

Dreaming has been intriguing to mankind for millennia. The Bible contains many dreams, and early Greek writers were fascinated by dreaming. The twentieth century saw dreaming made part of the therapeutic endeavour. Freud and his followers have defined dreaming for contemporary times. In psycho-analysis the preoccupation with dreaming



is to find from the individual what her hidden conflicts are, what her innate character is. It is very ego-centric being only concerned with the individual. It involves a profound exploration of the past and dramatises the biography of the individual. Such an analytic, or therapeutic, exploration is bounded by the finite world.

The advantages of such an analysis are many, not to be traduced or spurned, and not to be gainsaid. However, dreaming can be done in another way. This method was discovered at the Tavistock Institute in 1982. It turned the individual dream method on its head. For a century, starting with Freud, dreaming has been construed as being about the individual. What would happen if dreaming was done with many simultaneously?

### **Social Dreaming**

Social dreaming started from different assumptions. The principal was that the focus of social dreaming was to be on the dream and *not* the dreamer, which was left to individual analysis. Instead of the therapeutic dyad, a new “container” had to be thought of to accommodate the many meeting simultaneously. This the founders called a “matrix” to capture the idea that an exploration of dreaming and the undifferentiated unconscious could only be done in a matrix. The idea of “group” was rejected because not only was dream to be the focus but also experience suggested that a group would become pre-occupied with “I”, the ego, and would focus on the group dynamics instead of the dream. A matrix discovers what only a matrix can discover. What has been discovered is that by changing the “container” from the dyad to the matrix the “contained” of the dreaming changed, new contents of dreaming were being surfaced. The passage of time has shown the founders that a defence against the dream and the infinite is to mobilize the sure knowledge of group dynamics, which safely delivers the dream-participants on to the safe ground of what is finite.

By making dream the currency of the matrix, not the relationships among the participants’, a Faraday Cage was constructed, mentally, to keep other phenomena, like group dynamics, out. In time, this “invention” of the new container was justified because it allowed much more profound exploration of unconscious phenomena, and did it in a safe, non-threatening way.

What happens in Social Dreaming? The participants convene in a Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) for an hour, or an hour and a half. The time boundary is important. The participants are being asked to revel in dreaming and the unconscious for a limited time. They are being asked to submerge their ego to enter a state of ego-lessness in order that



they can experience the dream in a completely fresh way without the encumbrance of previous knowledge. It is a bounded exploration within the time-frame.

After the purpose is stated by one of the convening hosts, dreams are asked for.

A dream will be offered, another, and another. It may happen that someone will offer an association. Free association is to say what has crossed one's mind as the dream was recounted. It is to let the mind go free, not to monitor what one wants to say. There are as many associations to a dream as there are members of the matrix. This pattern goes on till the matrix finishes. Occasionally, this will be broken as the host, or any participant discerns a pattern to the dreaming and offers a working hypothesis. There is no hierarchy in the matrix and participants report that they experienced a new kind of freedom and tolerance in the matrix.

The SDM is directed at exploring the knowledge, information, and insight, contained in the dream. It is, therefore, a cultural exploration, quite different from individual, therapeutic dreaming. The dream is the centre of the matrix, the context is social and so the SDM is socio-centric, and not ego-centric. The bias is looking to the future, and seeing life as an admixture of comedy and tragedy.

There are two achievements for the SDM.

(i) Social dreaming inducts participants to the infinite by treating dream as a tool of cultural enquiry. That dreams arise from the unconscious of the individual is self-evident but the matrix makes the social unconscious evident. The matrix which is the web of unspoken feelings, emotions, thinking and thought that connects people. As individual unconscious minds resonate, or chime, in the matrix they imperceptibly become a social unconscious, and it is this which makes infinity realizable. This is made manifest through the unconscious scanning that is taking place all the time in the SDM.

(ii) The SDM introduces the dream-participants to the phenomenal experience of transforming thinking. The differences between consciousness and the unconscious have been referred to. It is the symmetrical logic of the unconscious that juxtaposes phenomena in novel ways, at times, bizarre and surreal. Through free association to dreams in the matrix the potential meanings of the dream are expanded. It is through this that the transformation of the thinking of the dream is initiated. Thus, new understanding and knowledge is made manifest.

Whereas a group is preoccupied with being a universe of meaning as ego-centric individuals struggle to define that universe, in a matrix it is different. A matrix learns to tolerate existence in a multi-verse of meanings and this leads to the infinite possibilities of dreaming in a matrix.





To further the thinking of the matrix a Dream Reflection Group is convened. This is a group, in contradistinction to the matrix. The purpose is to reflect on the pattern that connects the dreams. This means noting all the dreams with their themes and using amplification to enrich or enhance the dreams. Amplification is to situate the dream in its cultural context by referring to plays, novels, films, etc. that could enlarge the meaning of the dream. In the DRG the idea is to transform the thinking of the dream to ultimately formulate working hypotheses on what, e.g. the dreams are telling us about society, or the system we work in, or the state of contemporary society.

These two events — the SDM and the DRG — should be seen as working in tandem.

The DRG was invented because it was found that the SDM could only partly fulfil the transformation of thinking. More time was needed because the emphasis in the SDM was on collecting dreams from the dream-participants, leaving limited time for transformation of thinking and formulating working hypotheses.

Although the SDM is fun, it shouldn't be seen as an entertainment exclusively.

It is designed for the serious work of establishing meanings to the dreams and using that, through transformation of thinking, to discover new knowledge. That is its creative thrust. (Lawrence, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007)

The Daghdha enterprise convenes a SDM, and much of what has been written will be familiar to its members. What became apparent to the writer was that there is an unconscious choreography of dreams in a matrix. He had never thought of this way of framing the dreaming before. He looks forward to testing this idea in future SDMs.





# mary fox

## journal entry: the void

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### Introduction

What follows is neither philosophical, nor academic. It is however both self-indulgent and self-referential, as a journal can only be. It presents no “truths” and it is peppered with inconsistencies and flaws, because I am. I began my journal in May of this year in an attempt to retrieve myself from a guilt-ridden existential “tailspin” and in the faint hope that I might finally return to “writing”. Unconsciously and somewhat anticipating this event, I decided to “name” my journal, *All Aboard My Mid-Life Crisis*.

I might just add before I begin that one of the preparatory rituals I performed each time I wrote was to put a CD in the stereo to play on a continuous loop — to inspire the day’s musings as it were.

This was written accompanied by Kraftwerk’s *Man Machine*.

### The Following Thursday, July 26 — I Did Some Reading Since — Honestly . . .

God, this looks really bad, that I haven’t written anything in almost a week I mean, but I have read quite a bit of Alvin Toffler’s *Future Shock*, so I haven’t been totally idle. It also has been more a case of my not having being inspired to write anything, of having nothing of particular value to say, and of the damning effect of constant rain and grey skies. It has truly been a miserable summer so far, it has now been raining almost daily for over seven weeks and it is very difficult to remain positive and creatively productive when it is like that. What a waste of a summer holiday and I had such great plans. That’s the story of my life, — great plans, unrealised. **Stop beating yourself up Mary!** Whatever!

What I can recognise though is that I am extremely unfocused, I find it difficult to concentrate on exercises such as reading, not because I cannot understand the texts but rather because I get bored or distracted very quickly by something else. This inability to remain connected is, I believe, due to my not knowing where I want to go with what I am reading, my not knowing what I want from the text anymore than I know what

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I want from life itself. I was ready to make the shift this time last year while I was voraciously reading Heidegger and *On the Spiritual in Art* but now I feel separated even further from my passion. I simply do not work well without input, I need someone to bounce my ideas off, someone to engage with otherwise it feels like I'm having a oneway conversation which is, I suppose, what I have now resorted to within these pages. Isn't that a bit sad really, talking to yourself, — am I another casualty of Toffler's *Future Shock*? I reckon that I am really, my situation regarding my research was certainly affected by the acceleration syndrome within academia, churning out journals, books, doctorates, etc., — terrified to take time in doing so. A real case of “more haste, less speed”, caution and measure have become the new leprosy in research, bigger is better, size is everything, quantity over quality, speed is the new black, god is dead and we have killed him! What would Nietzsche have to say about the present world and what on earth would Ouspensky think of it all? I can only imagine. These days I tend to be full of ideas and no action; another learning curve for me, so much to learn, and it is endless, as it is I struggle to find a legitimate excuse for zero productivity.

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(. . .)

P left about a half hour ago and what I'd written since he left appears to have been swallowed by something, strangely enough just as I had been writing about the void. I imagine that to be some kind of extra-terrestrial response to what I had been contemplating. While writing about the void I had been considering how frequently what I thought about things, particularly things of apparent consequence, seemed to somehow disappear into the void, swallowed down a cosmic plughole so to speak. I tried to remember what I had been mulling over to have come into contact with the void and reckoned that I had in essence been thinking about the notion of “creativity” and in particular how I sometimes, but not necessarily frequently, have moments of creativity that occur in the form of an “epiphany” or a “revelation” of sorts. I was also thinking how natural and acceptable it is in the more or less secular contexts of art or philosophy to adopt terms belonging more recognizably within the world of religion, — but back for the moment to the notion of my **epiphany** having being “swallowed up” almost as soon as it has been revealed. And just **where** has it gone? I believe it has disappeared back into the void. So what and/or where is the void? For me any consideration of the void always takes me back to Parmenides, to my particular and arguably “questionable” understanding of him, with my concluding that the void resides in all of us, or rather that we **are** the void, operating like a cosmic breathing mechanism, inhaling and exhaling ideas, beings, and everything that “is”. We are both the breath and the breathing mechanism, symbiotically connected,



utterly dependent on one another for good or ill. Parmenides: One cannot conceive of “is not” without simultaneously considering “is”; in other words, we are always there, drifting in and out of consciousness of the void’s existence which is in itself a kind of paradoxical consideration. If the void is “nothingness” then how can we conceive of it? Ouspensky quite correctly argued that, “the Unknown is unlike anything that we can suppose about it”. (1931: 312) How then can we assimilate our being in the void in order to consider it, does that thereby render us non-existent, how can we both “be” and “not be”? Now there’s a conundrum; just what is our role in relation to the void? In his chapter on “Experimental Mysticism” in *A New Model of the Universe* Ouspensky notes that when we are obliged to attempt to describe or understand the **unfamiliar** we do so informed by our understanding of what **is familiar**, he says that “there is nothing separate, that is, nothing that can be described separately”, but he follows that in mystical states “the new world with which one comes into contact has no sides [the void?], so that it is impossible to describe first one side and then another”. (1931: 312) I, in a somewhat predictable fashion resort to attempting to understand the void by means of finding what’s “similar” or “familiar” to it so I think I’ll try the lazy option of the computer’s Thesaurus. In the Thesaurus the noun void gives forth the following options; **empty space, emptiness, hollowness, abyss, space, nothingness, cavity, and hole**. Adjectively it offers; **annulled, cancelled, invalid, null and void, and negated** — verbally it suggests, — **cancel, annul, make null and void, render null and void, vacate, reject** and finally **to throw out**. To throw out, now that brings me nicely to **Dasein**, Heidegger’s concept of man as a being **thrown** into the world, — does that suggest that the void has thrown us out into this **virtual reality**, which Ouspensky would conjecture we merely **appear** to inhabit, only to occasionally lure us back from whence we came? To my mind this seems to make some sense. The void’s **comparative noun “hollowness”** also appeals to me and for that the Thesaurus suggests; **worthlessness, emptiness, insincerity, futility, pointlessness and fruitlessness**, now who needs a therapist when they have a Thesaurus? Every prompt you could imagine as a catalyst for self reflection or self discovery seems to be there (within the Thesaurus) as each individual word suggests a possible root or alternative. Interestingly, or at least to me, **when you look up the void’s opposite**, for example **“world”**, you get the following; earth, planet, globe, **humankind, humanity and the human race** which would suggest that the aforementioned are what we essentially see as reinforcing our relevance and reality within this world. Necessarily, we do not consider our reality as inhabiting a void either spatially or socially, rather, we see ourselves as part of some kind of network of planets, systems and/or tribes. We need to feel connected to something or someone

in our **Be-ing**, so not only does the void somehow seem to cancel itself out, it also seems to be teeming with being(s) no doubt similar to ourselves. Now is that really profound, blatantly obvious or just entirely wrong? Continuing with the same theme (Thesaurus), when you **click on “abyss”** it (Thesaurus) assigns the following: **gulf, chasm, deep hole and again void**, — in the case of the first three each logically implies the presence of something concrete in order that it might exist. **Logically**, there cannot be a gulf, chasm or deep hole without there being sides or solid parameters to react against, therefore there cannot be an “is not” without an “is”. I would at this point caution myself that “logic” has its limitations when considering the philosophical or mystical dimensions inherent within the void. Anyway, back to the Thesaurus, this is great; now “gulf” throws out “gap” which gives in turn; hole, opening, break, breach, **slit**, fissure and crack and this again invokes Ouspensky’s observation, “**Is it not necessary and possible to recognize that the world is immobile and constant, and that it seems to us to be moving and evolving simply because we are looking at it through the narrow slit of our sensuous receptivity?**” (Ouspensky, 1920: 115) which suggests to me that he might have been suggesting that in some ways at least we perceive the world from within the void. Maybe I’m not so mad after all, incidentally “mad” offers amongst many others two particularly relevant ones, “round the bend” and “**beside yourself**”, — I LOVE IT!

As I appear to be on a bit of a roll, I will briefly consider another Ouspensky favourite “**shock**”, and amongst multifarious other offerings by the thesaurus we are given “**stun**” which means to **make unconscious**. Now that is interesting because Ouspensky’s view was that we needed to be constantly exposed to shocks, both cosmic and immediate in nature in order to **wake up** to fourth dimensional “conscious awareness” or “cosmic consciousness”. Does that suggest that we must first be knocked unconscious in order to become conscious or as Heraclitus posited does birth come from death as opposed to the other way around (is that right? I’d better check that up).

Now I’m back to writing drivel so I think I need to turn off the music and see whether anything else manifests . . . Silence: — (n.) quiet, stillness, peace, hush, calm, — (v.) make quiet, quieten, shut up, hush, shush, **make speechless**, — (v.) stop, **put an end to, gag, stifle, suppress**, quash, **smother**, curb and its Antonym “encourage”. I am hoping that the silence will encourage thought, start something off, release and give air to whatever, I am hoping in essence for its opposite. I am hoping to rouse my mind or consciousness into action.

# basta! youth collective i have lived a life so full of art

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I have lived a life so full of art, friendship, musical and cultural events, relationships, plans, conflict, compromise, ideas and thoughts. Not once did it occur to me that choreography played a part in any of this. Since I arrived in Limerick city, I have interacted with many individuals, from many backgrounds, and the focus for me has been to compare the different ideas, methods and idiosyncrasies of everyone I meet, in order to find the links and patterns common to all people. Also, since I took part in the think-tank, the notion of choreography has altered how I think utterly. I have realized that choreography is intrinsically linked to our every action, choreography essentially being control and application of thought and action. Once this notion is realized, control can be applied where before, the inherent links and patterns of human relations were buried subconsciously beneath a lifetime of indoctrination, advertising, media manipulation, and political and philosophical vitriol. All the confusion and mental conflict they create within us serves only to keep us in the dark about how much change we can really affect.

I am no longer a thinker- I am a choreographer of thought.

-ciarán

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# caroline heinrich in search of the “child’s innocence”<sup>1)</sup>

## Introit: Denial and Affirmation of Life

67

I begin with a quotation. “The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes”,<sup>2)</sup> writes Nietzsche in *Zarathustra*. (1883–5: 55) The child is innocent because she starts all over again from scratch. She starts from the space of emptiness that the lion has carved out. The space of emptiness is the space that has been emptied of the values of Western thought — values that the lion has *corrupted*. Exposed during the process of the radical destruction of these values is the fact that they signify “nothing”. They are based on a will to nothing, a denial of life. The metamorphosis of the lion into the child thus takes place at the moment of an “implosion into No”. This is the moment when the will that only denies must, in the final reckoning, deny itself.

The crucial point to be grasped here is this: for the invention of radically new values to occur, it is first absolutely necessary to achieve the void of values.

I want to investigate the question of why the creation of values — based as it is on the fundamental rule of the saying-yes to life — is to be found more than anywhere else on the playing field of the child. I will divide my inquiry into six parts.

First, I will underscore a critical opposition: what is the difference between the premises of Western value-production and the childish creation of values?

Second, I will say something about the problem of singularities.

Third, I will consider whether one can detect a Nietzschean trace of the “child’s innocence” in Jean Baudrillard’s thought.

Fourth, I will demonstrate that the playing field of the child is shaped by her perception of the pataphysical refinement of the world.

Fifth, I will establish why the destructive desire towards the object is unknown to the child.

Finally — enlightened by this last insight — I will briefly reflect once more upon the topic of singularity.

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE



## 1. Western Value-Production and Childish Value-Creation

According to Nietzsche, metaphysical Western thought is based on measuring the correlation between the value of an ethical principle and the degree of its reality. (1887–9: 13: 281) The assumption is that the highest ethical value would have the greatest reality. Within this worldview, “good” is connected with truth, reality, reason, being, order, unity, causality, and so on. “Evil” is associated with untruth, illusion, sensuality, nothingness, disorder, multiplicity, chaos, etc.

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Western morality says: the good is the true, the true is the real, and the real is substantial. The Nietzschean child replies: your truth doesn’t interest me, I know nothing of substance, and I am stumped by what you call reality.

Western morality says: the good is a principle on which you should act. The Nietzschean child replies: I know no principle, I know only *exceptions*, and my sporting game is different every time.

Western morality says: this is good, do this, this is good, do this. The Nietzschean child objects: well, that depends (*es kommt darauf an*).

## 2. The Singularity

“That depends” means: a singular constellation exists at a certain moment. At that moment, the Nietzschean child makes her judgment about “good” and “evil”.

An example: in the old order of values, pity for the suffering of others is a value in itself. In addition to limitless hypocrisy, this leads to the condemnation of those who do not suffer, those who do not wish to suffer, and those who do not place any special value on having sympathy for their inherited environment.

Against this, the pity of the Nietzschean child is expressed in the following remark by Nietzsche: “I frequently feel ‘pity’ where there is no suffering, but rather [. . .] a lagging behind contrasted to *what might have been*.” (1884–5: 11: 17, trans. by Alan N. Shapiro)

The pity of the Nietzschean child grounds the perception of the *denial of becoming*. It recognizes that active forces get severed from the property of affirmation by reactive forces.

The pity of the Nietzschean child is not necessarily related to the real suffering or not-suffering of others. It is not a “good” value in itself, no more than an instance of destruction would be a non-value in itself.



### 3. The “Child’s Innocence” chez Baudrillard

I come now to the question of the trace of the “child’s innocence” in Baudrillard’s thought. It shows through in his concept of the “insurrection of singularities” against the system of generalized exchange.

In 1976, Baudrillard wrote about the architecture of the World Trade Center — the twinness of the Towers, their binary character, their doubling of monopoly capitalism. He explained that we survive in a system where there is no longer difference and where all social spheres have become interchangeable. Marx had already grasped that “the movement of capital is without measure”. (Marx, 1966: 159, trans. by ANS) Baudrillard has made it clear just how without measure the movement of capital has become — so measureless that it has abolished all referentiality. Today pay and work are completely decoupled from each other. Work and leisure time are melded together in “lifestyle design”. We will take trade unions seriously again when they start to demand the doubling of salaries and “the right to be lazy” for anyone who wants it.

Work no longer serves production. It serves the reproduction of designed women and designed men. We are all designed not designing. And so we shall remain — until the day comes when we finally say aloud what we all have secretly been thinking for a long time: we don’t believe in productive work, nor in growth, nor in progress, nor in the state bureaucracy of Big Brother.

Politics is dead. Edmund Stoiber (Governor of Bavaria and 2002 Chancellor candidate of the German Christian Democratic Union) said it very well recently: “Our decision-making processes are no longer competitive”,<sup>3)</sup> he complained.

Baudrillard has shown that our society is a pornographic film studio. As in porno, it shows everything. Truer than true, realer than real, hyperreal. It produces only indifference and appearance, while at the same time hating appearance and — above all — seduction.

Baudrillard (1966) has explained why this logic of indifference — in the labor force, in the operational structures, in the networks — leads to the total surveillance of individuals and to the “impounding” of their lives. He has made us see the sadness of this society — where we are no longer allowed to flip the “off” switch; where we are no longer asked but tested; where we are not permitted to be silent (even when we have nothing to say); where we are not allowed to break the chain of communication; where we are required to know everything about ourselves; and where we are only permitted to fall in love with someone matching our “personal description”.



Baudrillard has uncovered the negative passion and self-hatred of this society. He has exposed the suffering of a society that ensures the adventure vacation while doing away with all real adventure. Declaring every catastrophe to be a security problem, we do not *feel* our suffering. Substituting for real feelings, our secret admiration for the counter-violence of terrorism enters the game.

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Baudrillard has shown that forces truly oppositional to the system would have to strike not on the level of political difference (a demolished arena which still exists only in the images of the system's advertisements for itself), but on the level of the system's indifference. Like the "I Love You" virus, which brought entire networks to their knees, and reduced this oh so perfect system to total ridiculousness. This little coquettish love virus showed how prone to breakdown systems that aspire to perfection become.

What resists a system of generalized exchange is not those forces which assert themselves in dialectical, differential, or oppositional relation to the global system, but rather those forces which cannot be integrated or liquidated by the system: singularities. Differences that participate in the global "advertising campaign" for the universal values of freedom, democracy and human rights are granted inclusion by the system of power. Singular radical otherness does not seek inclusion.

Here I have a doubt about Baudrillard's position. On one side, Baudrillard writes that singularities are neither positive nor negative. They do not represent an alternative. They belong to another order. They obey no value judgment. They submit to no *reality principle*. But on the other side, Baudrillard sees in our cultural forms of self-hatred and bad conscience a "negative passion". It is a form of reacting that he calls "degraded". (2002a: 56) In an article about the strike of so-called "cultural creators", Baudrillard speaks of a "justified revenge against the spectacle by the spectacle-people themselves". (2003a) This begs the question: what would be an "unjustified revenge"? Or: in what does the justice of the justified revenge consist?

I do not take issue with Baudrillard's statement that singularities submit to no value judgments. The problem for me is that — and as a great fan of Baudrillard's philosophy I hesitate to say this — he stops short of connecting the insurrection of singularities to the *gathering emergence* of the "child's innocence" as prophesied by Nietzsche. Baudrillard preserves in something of a fog this real breakout possibility for radical otherness.

A very delicate question, for example, is whether, in contrast to the "negative passion" of our cultural self-hatred, one can comprehend terrorism as a "positive passion". Baudrillard's commentary on the singular Event of September 11, 2001 suggests that viewpoint. In other words, one can infer — or make the supposition — that Baudril-



lard links the term "degraded" to passivity and "not degraded" to activity. In its open violence, 9/11 would be "activity". In its destructive abreaction to the system, 9/11 would nonetheless be a "positive passion". To a system that requires one to accept everything, to which one cannot give anything back, to which one cannot talk back, 9/11 would not be a degraded reply. It would not be a "degraded form of the impossible counter-gift", but on the contrary would have to be understood as a "successful symbolic exception".

Why successful? Because to confront a system *that excludes death* with the dead victim means in fact to humiliate that system. The system, for its part, has no effective answer to this death. Only the Twin Towers themselves knew the appropriate and commensurate symbolic response. Successful? Because the terrorist singularity revenges "all those singular cultures that have paid for the inauguration of the world's only superpower with their own disappearance". (2002a)

I doubt, however, that the Native Americans Big Foot (tribal chief of the more than 200 Miniconjou Lakota Sioux who were massacred in 1890 by the U. S. Seventh Cavalry) and Buddy Lamont (an Oglala Lakota killed by U. S. government forces during the 1973 siege at Wounded Knee) would have agreed to this form of revenge. "Agreed or not", Baudrillard would perhaps now think, "what is at stake here is a fundamental rule". "Of course!" I think back. But that is precisely the problem. Baudrillard writes that, at a certain point, "the fundamental rule always wins". A unidirectional gift can only be answered with a "violent abreaction" (strike, terrorism, etc.). (2002a) But is it not the case that Baudrillard wants, above all, to show that revenge — as a symbolic form of reversibility — confirms this fundamental rule? That he wants to make clear that neither society nor the world can bear a principle of unity?

I do not believe that the only important thing to decide is if something is a singular exception. It is not sufficient to say that singularities are decisive regardless of whether they embody our best or our worst. It is not enough to correlate the valuation of a "degraded" or "not degraded" form of reacting with the criterion of passive or active. I think that the valuation of singularities must take as its point of departure the meaning of the *illusionary act* of a Nietzschean child.

Of course, from the standpoint of the "good system", singularities are "evil". They are so radically other that they do not allow themselves be integrated into the "system of good". The system tries nonetheless every time to do exactly that: to integrate them, to assimilate them. "Recognition of difference" is perhaps the most hypocritical way of achieving the elimination of the radical other. The other is "understood", even when she does not at all want to be understood. As far as the system is concerned, her story



should be narrated as a digestible romance of identity and difference, rendered useful as an advertisement for cultural difference. Baudrillard writes about this “risibility of our altruistic ‘understanding’”. “For ‘We respect the fact that you are different’ read: ‘You people who are underdeveloped would do well to hang on to this distinction because it is all you have left.’ The signs of folklore and poverty are excellent markers of difference.” (1990) And further: “Nothing could be more contemptuous — or contemptible.” The radical other is allowed to be our difference, but not to give us anything. Above all, she must not irritate us by being a non-understandable other. Consider the category of “misappropriated development aid”, which designates the circumstance of the specified purpose of the aid getting lost. In a Mexican slum, a development aid worker broke out in tears because donated plastic container toilets, intended for the improvement of hygiene, were used by the inhabitants for chicken breeding.

The observation that, from the standpoint of the “good system”, singularities are “evil”, can be reverse-formulated. The “evil” singularities are an illusionary “good”, an obscene “good”. They oppose themselves to a completely degenerated system. A multiplicity of singularities defends itself against the principle of unity. One can cheer the chicken breeding of the slum residents as a re-enchanting tear in the system.

But there are also less enchanting tears. Baudrillard writes: “It is intolerable for the ‘free’ world that in a certain territory [Afghanistan], ‘democratic’ freedoms — music, television, or even the face of women — can be forbidden. That a country can do the exact opposite of what normally goes by the name of civilization.” (2002a) But is it only intolerable for those who still believe in the decaying delusional idea of universal values?

I find it intolerable that music is forbidden to be heard. I find it intolerable that the face must veil itself. But the taboo in a certain territory (France) on wearing a head scarf exemplifies the vanishing into neutrality of every value in the West, the dissolving of all the West’s values into nonpartisan nothingness. The argument for the French law is that the Muslim head scarf is a “political sign”. Translation: the unpolitical and the neutral are the “good signs”.

Baudrillard would cite them both as insurrectional singularities against the global system. But for me there is a critical difference between the “détournement” (diverting) of the plastic container toilets for chicken breeding practiced by the Mexican slum residents and the Taliban’s prohibition of music and faces. In the Mexican chicken breeding, I see a singularity *that defends singularity in itself*. In the other kind of “exception” to global capitalist-consumerist culture, this is not the case. And it is the Nietzschean child who is



at play here. Zarathustra’s First Discourse. Metamorphosis of the Third Kind. The Lion into the Child. First Contact with the Foundational Property of the Will to Power. It is the nurturing of this will that *legitimizes the judgment* that is — at last and for the first time — able to discriminate *between the denial of life and the affirmation of life*. “Yes, a sacred Yes is needed, my brothers, for the sport of creation.” (1883–5: 55)

Why does Nietzsche choose the figure of the child? The child takes up her ground against the *Old Man* of Hegel who has reconciled himself with the dried-up “concrete” of life. Hegel’s *Old Man* — for whom all is already said and done — *À l’Ouest rien de nouveau?* — is content (*man muss zufrieden sein*) with “this here” reality that he has dubbed to be good and reasonable. From which he has excluded everything “unreasonable”: chance, sensuality, possibilities. Hegel writes: “In ordinary life one calls even the most dwarfed and ephemeral existence by accident a reality. But even our most common feelings confirm that a contingent existence does not merit the emphatic name of the real. Contingency is an existence that has no greater value than something that is merely possible, that *might as well not be as be*.” (1986: 48) The accidental — because it is merely something possible — has, for Hegel, no value. It has no “reality” value and thus no “moral” value. And so it goes!

For the child — in her “first motion”, in her impossibility of being hard-wired to experiences — accident and possibility have value. Her world is the aleatory world of objects. Her reality is saturated through and through by that which — according to what Hegel thinks — does not deserve the name of the real. The world of Hegel’s *Old Man* is a metaphysical reality. The child’s world is post-metaphysical or *pataphysical*.

#### 4. Pataphysics: Photography and the Child

The world in photography is the world of the child. Baudrillard writes: “The joy of taking photographs is an objective delight. Whoever has not experienced the objective rapture of the image one morning in town or desert will never in any way understand the pataphysical refinement of the world.” (1999a: 129) The child understands this pataphysical refinement. Pataphysics is the condition for what Nietzsche calls the beginning of the creation of new values — the brave new world where *saying yes to life* will really count for the first time.

Baudrillard has reflected brilliantly on photography. How is it, he asks, that the photo — which does not exist in advance — is able to document anything? The photo is *illusionary*. The objects thereby illuminated at the same time announce their own dis-



appearance. What is depicted exists no longer in this way. The photo is illusionary in its “discreet charm of a previous life”. (1999a: 134) It is artificial because it seizes in interruptions the uninterrupted course of events. It freeze-frames an unrepeatable moment. It is a clipping, the snapshot of a clipping. It is unique, singular, incomparable. About its meaning it remains silent. It has no meaning. It has no reference. It has no measure. Like the world, the photo lacks nothing. Like the world, it gets along fine without us. It is what it is. Or, in reverse, the world — *back-transmitting* through technology and photography — is everything that metaphysical Western thought does not want to think. The world is “evil”: illusionary, unreal, meaningless, disordered, singular . . .

Baudrillard’s reflections on photography are themselves “evil”. “Against the philosophy of the subject and the contemplating gaze”, they are an “anti-philosophy of the object”. (p. 132) In the photographic act, the subject disappears. She instead occupies the “unseen site of representation”. (p. 133) The subject must mentally empty herself like a film negative. In her body posture, the photographer must snuggle up to the “posture of objects”. In relation to the judgment of metaphysical philosophy — for which it is the subject who thinks the world — the relative values of subject and object get reversed. Baudrillard grasps that photography only has “sense” at all when the “fundamental rule” is observed: “It is the object which sees us, the object which dreams us.” (p. 142)

“Every press on the shutter-release”, writes Baudrillard, “which puts an end to the real presence of the object, also causes me to disappear as subject, and it’s in this reciprocal disappearance that a transfusion between the two occurs.” (1999b: 147–8) Every press on the shutter-release sends one tumbling *through the looking-glass* into the “inverse” world of the child. The child’s world is an “evil” world. For the child, there is, in any case, no “real presence of objects”. She knows no reality principle — “for illusion isn’t the opposite of reality”. She is always absent from herself as subject. In the “reciprocal disappearance” (p. 147) of “real” object and “real” subject, it is the child who stands fundamentally in this relationship of transfusion.

The child possesses no concept of time, duration, interval, or continuity. She lives first of all in “space”. The world shows itself to the child in the same way that it presents itself in the photo: “discontinuous and punctual”. (1999a: 133) Without orientation in time, the child lives in a transfusing space. It is a “space” like that which opens for the photographer in the moment of pressing the shutter-release. Continuous time — along with the subject — disappears.

The child lives in a space of the in-between, a space between sender and receiver — outside of spoken language and its sense. She is agile in her way of living the transfu-



sion-relation to the world. She is in contact with the “objects” of the world — which she does not read as signs, but rather perceives as symptoms. Intuition is her umbilical cord to the world.

The child gets on well with those objects that are “strange to themselves”, in the region of their blurredness and trembling. She enjoys the excitement of “watching the grass grow” and can feel what “is in the air”. She is in touch with the pataphysical refinement of the world.

Baudrillard tells the story of the African artist who was commissioned to make a sculpture for the front plaza of the World Trade Center. The finished sculpture portrayed the artist himself drilled through by planes. He was killed in his studio on September 11, 2001 along with his sculpture.

Baudrillard speaks of an “amazing intuitive presentiment” — and understands this to be an especially delicate area of intuition. (2003b: 108) The French thinker was taken to task in the U. S. media for having dared to open such a line of inquiry during the February 19, 2002 roundtable discussion at New York University. The Verso Press English translation of “Requiem for the Twin Towers” (in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*) leaves out Baudrillard’s recounting and analysis of the African artist sculpture story. The Verso editors refer mysteriously to another “version of this paper” that was the one that Baudrillard actually delivered in Washington Square.<sup>4</sup> (2002b: 36)

Commentators in the American press were so irritated by Baudrillard’s remarks linking the sculpture and the Event of which it was a *precognition* because they adjudicate the truthfulness or falsehood of a philosopher’s statements utilizing the measuring rod of metaphysical truth. For them, precognition can only be thought as something that “has to happen”. Any “precog” claim is automatically suspect because it implies stopping the future dead in its tracks, putting an end to the future’s openness, and transforming life into destiny.

But precognition can be thought in another — post-metaphysical — way. In the moment in which something analogous to the pressing of the shutter-release or the “punctum of photography” (Barthes, 1981) brings about the *graduation from the playing level of the intentional subject*, the continuity of time is also halted. The reversibility of intentionality is accompanied by a reversibility of time. The player who has reached the *game-level of intuition* now faces the challenge of objectively backwards-running time. This mode of time, however, does not concern the future reality of the subject. On the contrary, it allows a *notifying object* to appear to one of its possible pasts. Intuitive inspiration or the sudden coming-to-me of a thought evidence the fact that, as Baudrillard



writes, “decisions and thoughts secretly come from elsewhere”. (1999b) It is not about foresight, but rather about what I propose to call *back-sight*.

The term “foresight” correlates with the chronological time of the intentional subject. This temporality, however (precisely at the moment of the coming-to-me of the thought from elsewhere), is absent from itself. The term “backsight” indicates that in a singular instant the possible past of an object is grasped in a certain constellation. Whether or not an Event then transpires remains dependent upon an equally singular uncertain constellation.

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The hypothesis is the following: there is backwards-running temporality — but its existence documents, explains, proves, and determines nothing. “Backsight” — because it makes known a possible having-become of things — is therefore not a presentiment that, once it comes true, can be explained as a metaphysical truth. It is much more a *pataphysical* truth, a truth with which “nothing” is to be gotten.

Figure of the future creation of new values, the (Nietzschean) child dispenses with the concept of continuous time. She lives in a space of the notifying object, and in intimate contact with objects. She is permanently active in a world of *backsight*. It is an intuitive and delicate *Existenz*. Living entirely in space, the child is confronted with backwards-running time. She comes face-to-face with the potentiality of a second future, or a multiple promise of things. *Back to the Future. Minority Report*.

Through the photo, the world shows itself as back-transmitting, as nothing. Nothing — from the standpoint of the metaphysical reality principle, that is. It is a fascinating nothing: the “disorder of a null world”, (1999a: 135, trans. from the French modified by ANS) the “emptiness of a null value” possessing a “magical self-evidence”, (p. 136) as Baudrillard writes. The magical enchantment of seduction.

## 5. The Child Knows No Destructive Desire Towards the Object

For the child there are no null worlds — because she knows nothing of metaphysics. Fascination through nothingness becomes fascination pure and simple. It is a small yet decisive difference. The world in the photo is an empty enchantress. For the child, the world is an overflowing enchantress. Whereas the world in the photo is a puzzling nothing, the child actually touches and feels this nothing. Whereas the world in the photo is silent, the world for the child is eloquently silent. Whereas the world in the photo is absent from itself, the child lives in the *real effects* of this absence (or the appearance of the “new real”). Whereas the defiance of the world in the photo resides in the world’s



seductive energy, the defiance of the *pact of lucidity* between world and child resides in the world’s promise.

Baudrillard says that the “only profound desire” is the desire for the (sexual) object, for that which does not need me, which can quite happily exist without me. The desire “for this alien perfection” is at the same time the desire “to smash this alien perfection or to undress it”. (1999a: 132, trans. from the French modified by ANS) The child, however, lives in freedom with respect to this desire — because she is herself alien, a strange attractor. She knows no desire for radical otherness because *it lives within her*. For the child in the space of the notifying object, what lives in things is above all a promise. She knows no fundamental desire to destroy creatures and things which for her are swarming with possibilities. Stated in a different terminology, the child is a hostage taker who does not kill her hostages before they have revealed the location of the buried treasure.

Whereas the world in the photo is absent, for the child the world is absently present. The “yes” of the child — the “yes to the sport of creation” — is a response to the challenge issued by the world. It is the possibility of making something absent present. The child in all of her actions is this small picnoleptic for whom the world and the gaze do not take place. If the photograph, through the pressing on the shutter-release, takes leave of the world and detaches itself from itself, then it succeeds, as Baudrillard writes, “to capture something of this dissimilarity and this singularity” so that “something changes insofar as the ‘real’ world and, indeed, the reality principle itself, are concerned”. (1999b: 133) And it is exactly this that the child at play “thinks”. In her sport, the child gives something singular back. Each act of the child is a tear (*ein Riss*) in the reality principle.

Picture the following: a running child knocks over the hat that a beggar has laid out on the street asking for money. The day before, this same child had pressed a franc into the hand of a schoolmate’s rich father.

Considered from the viewpoint of the reality principle, the child is living “in the false”. Only in reverse order would her actions have had any sense, would they have been reasonable. From the viewpoint of the reality principle, she is living an illusion. The child’s games have no place in the Western classification of ethical realities. For Western metaphysics, “illusionary acts” are useless. They are “nothing”. But from the viewpoint of the child, things are different. There is a tear in the reality principle. Maybe the child pressed a franc into the hand of the rich father because she liked his hands. Maybe, for the child, the rich father was in need of receiving a gift from someone. Maybe the child sensed that the beggar had cut himself off from doing something that he could better do. Maybe the child was reacting to some symptom of the father’s perchance impending



bankruptcy. The possibilities are endless. It is not important to determine which of these possibilities is true.

It is not about seeing in the child's games a principle that one can apply (like making the rich richer and the poor poorer!). What matters is to grasp that the child — who is without principles — “believes” in her game. She believes in her illusionary act — an act answerable to nothing. Her sport takes off from a perception of the world that is answerable to nothing. The child always exists in a singular instant and in relation to a punctual (Roland Barthes) order of things. It is to this arrangement that she playfully — and just as instantaneously — responds. Like the world “in its ability to defy all resemblance”, (1999b: 138) she acknowledges the notifying object. The child, in her illusionary act, brings to realization a possibility of absence (like the African artist working on his sculpture). Immersed in her world of “back-sighting”, the “belief” of the child at play consists of altering an absent constellation.

On the basis of and through the illusion, the child creatively and inventively decrees her own order of things. The Nietzschean fundamental rule of the saying-yes to life as creative will is no longer about “the secret exigency to be seen, desired and thought by the object and the world”, (p. 145) but rather to metamorphose, defer and reverse object and world. The child's mode of existence — seismograph of the pataphysical refinement of the world — does not allow her momentary, singular act(s) to be recuperated by the general order. Creative power based on an “illusionary act” (paradoxically) wants no recognition as power.

## 6. Conclusion: Singularity Redux

Let me return to what I said at the beginning. Morality says: this is good, do this, this is good, do this. The Nietzschean child objects: *that all depends*. The creation of new values of the saying-yes to life does not always mean preservation and never destruction.<sup>5)</sup> The component of destructive energy in the illusionary act of the Nietzschean child directs itself against those powers which persist in so punctiliously abiding by the reality principle. The *negative passion* will raise itself against the ruling power that one-sidedly only gives, and that knows how to receive only through its expert co-opting of the singularity of creative power.

And what about Mexican chicken breeding in plastic container toilets? The slum residents revenge the contemptuous gift insofar as they divert the gift away from its purpose. They metamorphose and reinvent it. They “make their own deal” and reverse



the gastronomical sequence: first the chickens, then the shit. Like the Nietzschean child, the Mexican slum residents are a singularity defending itself.

Those who forbid music and faces are not a self-defending singularity. They interdict the languages that are the most cryptic for them. They associate the visible with forbidden truth. They ban the “faces of seduction” into invisibility. The Taliban are like the priest classes about whose “extreme fear of *sensuality*” Nietzsche wrote, crediting them with the “[conditional] insight that it is in that domain of experience where the *dominant order* in its totality is threatened in the worst way”. (1887–9: 13: 384, trans. by ANS) Those who prohibit music and faces inhibit the appearance of the child — whose connection with the world is based on sensual contact.

If one endeavours, with Baudrillard, to confront a thought that tries to reverse the total social order with the singular Event of September 11, 2001, one must recognize that the attackers not only destroyed the symbol of the indifference and unidirectional giving of “the world’s only superpower”, but that they also destroyed two “unique”, “singular”, very beautiful skyscrapers. One must at the same time see — in this “insurrection of singularity”, in the most apparent form of revenge, in the symbolic gift of death — the attempt to make an example of the “power over death”. An act of *statuary intimidation* of those who cannot exchange their death (and who are therefore despised), of those whose death was not allowed, and of those about whose singularity were never asked. The Nietzschean child knows no principle. Yet her fundamental rule, that “sacred yes”, shows through.

#### REFERENCES

- 1) This is a slightly amended version of the essay published online at the Avinus Press magazine, <http://www.avinus-magazin.eu/html/heinrich-baudrillard-child.html>, translated from the German by Alan N. Shapiro with modifications to the original text approved by the author. Published in German as *Auf der Suche nach der “Unschuld des Kindes” in Philosophie und Kunst, Jean Baudrillard: Eine Hommage zu seinem 75. Geburtstag*, edited by Peter Gente, Barbara Könches and Peter Weibel, Berlin: Merve Verlag, 2005.
- 2) Nietzsche’s discussion of the metamorphoses of the spirit from the camel to the lion to the child appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
- 3) ARD Tagesschau (German Channel One Evening News), July 8, 2004.
- 4) The passage censored by Verso Press was discussed at the February 19, 2003 debate at Maison des cultures du monde in Paris entitled *Pourquoi la guerre?* at which Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and the journalist Alain Gresh were the principal participants.
- 5) Therefore a principle of absolute nonviolence would be rejected.



# lawren bale

## consciousness sketched

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consciousness stretched  
enfolding flexible partaking  
in combined interaction  
cognitive constructs  
necessarily autonomic  
autopoietic unconsciously  
processing logical types  
unfolding wrap-around  
in dialectic calibrations  
shared mutual causality  
our collective environs  
plotting and projecting  
simultaneously sculpting  
knowing-tasting-feeling  
being . . . each of us  
cartographers,  
painting our colorfully  
collective images  
of this world

FRAMEMAKERS





# michael klien, steve valk dance as a metaphor for thought

## A Dream

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*Last night I took part in a massive demonstration against humanity . . . against the insanity and intrinsic contradictions in individuals and within society as a whole. I was amongst a throng of tens of thousands of people gathered . . . each holding a candle in their hands. There was a profound sense of urgency made most noticeable by a deathly and wordless silence that arose because no one there had any idea what to do, what to say, or what action to take. Finally, for no apparent reason . . . some people started to raise their candles slightly, soon everyone followed. “Look”, I whispered to my girlfriend . . . “They are finally doing something!!!”*

Michael Klien, 12.02.07

## A Poem

*These nymphs, I wish to perpetuate them.<sup>1)</sup>*

Stephane Mallarmé, *Improvisation of a Faun*

## A Calculation

*Since curvature describes gravitation, we might say that as we approach the singularity, the gravitational interaction will grow to infinity. Neither space nor time retain the form we are accustomed to.*

Harald Fritsch, *The Curvature of Spacetime: Newton, Einstein and Gravitation*

## Emergence Becomes Visible When the Outline of the Pattern Can Be Seen

STEVE VALK: In the 1930s the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson went to the island of Bali and made a film of the “Barong”, a 6 hour-long dance/theatre ritual in which the whole village participates. (Bateson and Mead, 1952) This ceremonial “play”

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





is only performed when there is trouble or disharmony, when the dead are seen walking through the village at night, etc. The costumes are lavish, the various roles are meticulously rehearsed, the choreographies are precise and are taught at an early age. What is fascinating about the film is that suddenly, in the middle of the performance, some of the young dancers go into a trance — they fall over, shake violently, etc. The trance then seems to spread like wildfire overtaking other performers and even a few audience members. Some of the male dancers take their knives and try to stab themselves. Concerned audience members immediately jump on top of them to prevent self-inflicted injury. At this point, the film narrator explains that this state of disruption is precisely what the Barong is meant to induce. The enactment of the ritual ceremony or “performance” is all in preparation for the moment when it will break down and fall apart.

For it is in this state of emotional and situational conflagration that “the Gods have arrived”. In the midst of the mayhem, this outburst of chaos, the village priest or shaman sets up his ceremonial apparatus and begins to commune, to burn offerings, to address the village troubles.

### Indigenous Psychologies of the Self

*Cultures that emphasize firm boundaries and high personal control tend to view the self as exclusionary or “self-contained”. Fluid boundary, strong field-control cultures view the self as “ensembled”, meaning that the self is inclusive of other individuals.*

E. Martin Walker, *Experiences in Social Dreaming*, p. 218

MICHAEL KLIEN: What I would say about the Balinese dance ceremony is that “a psychic structure” would seem to be the prime mover of the piece and that the bodies themselves are not discreet units but they become “caught up in” another kind of structuring process. Of course these bodies correspond or overlap with “individual selves”, but during the course of the ceremony, these very same bodies are drawn into a different organizing pattern or constellation. The unknowing participants become enmeshed in a wider communicational field or “psychic structure”.

### Strange Currents of a Situation

On the subject of mind/body relations, the anthropologist Gregory Bateson has a profound and revolutionary theory. He describes six formative steps, that I won't go into at



this point, that lead to the creation of what he calls “Mind”. (Bateson, 2002: 86) Mind according to Bateson’s understanding, is a certain constellation of a system that is able to retain information. Therefore, a Mind could consist of non-living elements, like a traffic system, or be composed of many organisms, like a school of fish.

It may function for brief, as well as extended, periods of time and is not necessarily defined by a fixed or firm boundary like skin. If a Mind should have consciousness, then this consciousness is always only partial. Bradford Keeney, a psychologist and admirer of Bateson, has called the mind a “conversational pattern” and bodies “the participants in the conversation”. (Keeney, 2005: 80) Each of these kinds of “bodies” also functions as a Mind, in the Batesonian sense, and is engaged in larger conversational patterns with other bodies, which in turn, constitute larger aggregates of Mind.

### Non-Symmetric States of Stable Equilibrium

STEVE VALK: So one cannot escape the fact that, at least in systems-theoretical terms, there is no distinction between mind and body. Across all fields, all levels are linked. The formal, highly-ritualized Balinese performance reaches a critical state at which a kind of rupture of the symbolic order takes place. At the point where the “the gods arrive” there is a radical almost brutal moment of perceptual re-patterning.

Bateson associates this phenomenon with something he calls “kinesthetic socialization”, a means by which individuals are prepared for altered consciousness, for a “temporary escape from the ego-organized world”. (Donaldson, 1991) The Balinese ritual performance could be seen then as an enactment of Mind, an example of the organism called “village” and its capacity to process and respond to information in a self-corrective way. After the chaos, the psychic hurricane, a recalibrated “rejuvenated” pscho-social configuration emerges.

*In the science of morphology, physico-chemical processes are detected and analysed. Their ultimate origin and the relationship of all such separate processes are, according to assumption, buried in unfathomable complexity. Thus, organic life is conceived of as a set of centers where the coordination of causal chains is totally lost in complexity. These active centers are what we call organisms. Now this assumption makes for a radical difference from an idea that has always been successful in inorganic science. It is that complex systems can be successfully studied by breaking them down into simples which are easier to analyse. Such a scheme was first described by Descartes in 1637 and is known as the “Cartesian Method”. If we accept*



*the concept of an organism as just stated (vague as it still is), we can say that “biology is a non-Cartesian science”. Since theoretical parts of all past natural science have been Cartesian in this sense we may conclude that biology is fundamentally and qualitatively different from physical science.*

Walter M. Elsasser, *Reflections on a Theory of Organisms*

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MICHAEL KLIEN: I have always had a sense that a thought is a physical act and I have always been discontent with people in the dance world who want to get over the Cartesian split by just talking about the body. This is a bizarre notion. You propagate the same idea, just from the other side. You actually widen the gap. How can you only talk about the body when you want to address the whole thing.

Conversational patterns are thoughts, they are not just up there (points to his head). Thought can be everywhere. Thoughts are between us. For things to come into being it is a matter of thought.

STEVE VALK: Like this plastic water bottle I am holding . . . this is a “thought object”. With a sculptural aesthetic, computerized bar codes, with a position in recycling systems. Theoretically, it could be blessed and used as container for holy water, etc.

MICHAEL KLIEN: Gregory Bateson is one of the founders of this kind of thinking. In the 1960s he was part of an LSD experiment. During the testing he was shown a rose and his comment was, “It is amazing how much thought went into this rose for it to become a rose.” (Bateson, 2002: 86)

We are closing in on our theme right now, what we mean by “Dance as a Metaphor for Thought”. We are not saying that “thought is dance”, but we are talking about a certain figure or “**vision of dance**”, whereby the constellations are loose enough to actually reach a state of excitement or play without falling apart, without losing identity. A system such as a society or a state can be dancing, unlike our present-day situation, where the structures are too tightly constrained by what the visionary architect Frederick Kiesler calls “the dogmatic slumber of reductionist thinking”. In his book *The Man Without Qualities*, Robert Musil describes how a nation state can be in flux. “Kakania” is a place where things become possible and great ideas are born, where priceless, timeless artefacts are realized, because the conditions are right for the whole system, which in this case is a nation state, to dance. So the notion of dance has to be applied to all systems rather than applying it exclusively to the physical body.



STEVE VALK:

*Why does dance dawn on Nietzsche as a compulsory metaphor for thought? It is because dance is what opposes itself to Nietzsche's great enemy, an enemy he designates as the "Spirit of Gravity". Dance is, first and foremost, the image of thought subtracted from every spirit of heaviness.*

Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 57

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MICHAEL KLIEN: In Western societies dance has developed along the lines of what Nietzsche maintains is the opposite of dance, what he calls "obedience and long legs".<sup>2)</sup> For Nietzsche, dance is about a lightness which opposes itself to the "Spirit of Gravity" which he associates with the military parade, "obedience and long legs", etc. Strangely enough, when one looks at the development of western dance in the 20th century, one sees primarily that, "obedience and long legs". One sees the dancing body subjected to choreography. For some reason a kind of perversion has taken place. People have tried to construct performative architectures to attain a state of dance, whether it be Martha Graham or 20th century ballet technique. But along the way, the map has been mistaken for the territory, the architecture for the experience. Maybe that's where it has all gone wrong. The structures are not the dance, they are perceptual orientations for getting there. In ballet for instance, the subjective range of movement is very limited, so only the best people can actually attain a state of dance. Most performers are simply executing movement within precisely defined limitations.

### A Persistence

*I believe thought must take a step back. A step toward what Mallarmé and the pre-Islamic ode have in common, to wit: the desert, the ocean, the bare place, the void. We must re-compose, for our time, a thinking of truth that would be articulated onto the void without passing through the figure of the master: Neither through the master sacrificed nor through the master invoked.*

Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 57

STEVE VALK: I would like to go back to the story of the Balinese dance/theatre which only realizes its aims when everything falls apart . . . to look at the certain vision of dance we have been describing . . . this notion of a void, of everything falling apart . . . in *Time Magazine*



I read an article about the Irish rock band U2. Their manager described the torturous creative process the group goes through everytime they are at work on a new album. “For them to come up with a great song”, the manager said, “God has to walk through the room.” This is the point for me, in regards to the notion of “Dance as a Metaphor for Thought”, where we reach a kind of event horizon, this place where things fall apart, when “the gods arrive” or “when God walks through the room”, etc. At this point, there emerges for me a deeper awareness of the certain “vision of dance” we have been talking about. Not of dance thought on its own terms, on the basis of its history and technique, but of dance as it is given welcome and shelter by the wider fields of human understanding.

*Dance is a metaphor for thought precisely inasmuch as it indicates, by means of the body, that a thought, in the form of its eventual surge, is subtracted from every pre-existence of knowledge. How does dance point to this subtraction? Precisely in the manner that the “true” dancer must never appear to “know” the dance she dances. Her knowledge (which is technical, immense, and painfully acquired) is traversed, as null, by the pure emergence of her gesture. “The dancer does not dance” means that what one sees is at no point the realization of a pre-existing knowledge, even though knowledge is, through and through, its matter or support. The dancer is the miraculous forgetting of her own knowledge of dance.*

Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 66

## Decoherence and Its Implications in Quantum Computation

*By contrast, classical theories, as understood here, consider their primary object of investigation as, at least in principle (it may not be possible in practice), available to conceptualization and, often, to direct or, at least sufficiently approximate, representation by means of such theories — in short, as knowable. This is “the knowable” of my title. Classical thinking does not deny that there are things that are, in practice or even in principle, beyond theory or any knowledge. In contrast to non-classical theories, however, classical theories are not concerned with the irreducibly unknowable or its effects upon the knowable. The irreducibly unknowable, if allowed is placed strictly outside their limits, rather than is seen, as it would be in non-classical theories, as a constitutive part of knowledge. Thus, most classical physics, such as classical, Newtonian mechanics, can be and customarily is seen as classical theory in this sense, in contrast to quantum mechanics in Bohr’s or other nonclassical interpretations.*

Arkady Plotnitsky, *The Knowable and the Unknowable: Modern Nonclassical Thought and the “Two Cultures”*



## Personal Threshold Experience

I remember a performance of *As a Garden in a Setting* in Paris where Jone San Martin was dancing in her first piece for Ballett Frankfurt. That evening, I witnessed one of the best dance performances I have ever seen. It was stupendous, raw and brilliantly danced by everyone. There really was a feeling of all the performers on stage being in a kind of trance. At one point though, I noticed that Jone seemed to slip and fall flat on her back. She got up immediately and continued dancing. After the show, I went backstage and found her embarrassed and upset about having fallen. She could not explain what happened . . . just that in the middle of the duet . . . she had looked at her partner and had been overcome by the feeling that if she were to suddenly throw herself backwards, he would be there to catch her. This is what she did and all that was there was the hard wooden stage floor.

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MICHAEL KLIEN:

## A Statement

Dance allows the thought body to show itself, it is the showing of the body in thought, independent of what constitutes such a body, whether its boundaries are made of skin or by constitutions played out in laws. Dance is the forming of certain configurations of thought, expressed in manifold ways by the birth of ideas or the shivering body. That is why evolution, animals and nation states are said to be dancing at times, because certain conditions are met allowing a system to be flexible and its emerging dancing body to be naked, anonymous and selfless. This is what constitutes dance. Hence dance is a matter of thought pointing towards the possibility of change as inscribed in the body. For the spectator to perceive dance, it is an exercise in trust, demanding the audience's absolute gaze, oblivious to representational decor and fully focused on the underlying nakedness of a flexible body in thought.

Our civilization has been turning dance into a perversion of itself, applying to and onto it everything that will prohibit its existence in the form of predetermined rigid time, space and action. It might be a symptomatic need to resist mortality's grip. Maybe the reasons are to be found in the dominant muddle of language, which in Bateson's words "stops us from thinking straight" and from dancing in general. (Bateson, 1970) To govern dance is in itself a misleading conception, a seemingly vain attempt to fence off its



mortal nature, putting shackles on that which cannot be tamed without turning it into an empty shell, a sign pointing towards something other than what it is. To choreograph dance conventionally which sets movement into stone is a self-deluding act . . . a brand of misguided creativity. Dance is Dance and cannot be tampered with, just as Bateson reminds us that “God cannot be mocked”. (Bateson, 1987: 89) Dance has been crippled by conventional choreography for centuries. It is time to release choreography’s hold on dance and let it simply be.

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### **Parallel Process: The Seeing of Sleep**

*Sleep is compact fidelity, tenacity and continuity. This last fidelity is the very act of the subject as it has now become. It is “of words vacant” because it no longer needs to experiment with hypotheses. And it possesses a “body grown heavier” because it no longer has any need for the agitation of desire . . . The subject of poetic truth is neither soul nor body, neither language nor desire. It is both act and place, an anonymous obstinacy that finds its metaphor in sleep.*

Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*

STEVE VALK: When I present the results of dramaturgical research for original dance or theatre work, it almost always involves the creation of a kind of presentational container, a perceptual aesthetic space for these ideas. Rooms are hung from floor to ceiling with photocopies, texts and drawings; strewn and overgrown with cut-out figures, writings, etc. these spaces or “thought jungles” are criss-crossed and hung with found objects. To engage with the material, with this research, it is necessary to weed and wander through: to walk, duck, spy, sometimes to hunt. Embedded in the complex matrix of associations, you may find objects or ideas of interest or they may find you. There is a term in psychology and anthropology called “total field awareness” which accurately describes the sensibility or quality of perception that is evoked in this kind of transitional space between dramaturgical research and dance or performance creation.

### **The Communication of Meaningful Vision**

A second important quality or characteristic of these dramaturgical thought-spaces involves the particular “awareness” with which the materials are gathered and selected. The starting point and guiding sensibility for research of this kind, for the assembling of material and the creation of the perceptual space of its presentation, is rooted in a pro-



found and seemingly paradoxical sense of “not-knowing”. It is difficult to describe how primary, how rudimentary, this underlying quality of undecidability is for the process of exploration and research. It is a kind of “elusive awareness”, a “strange understanding” in my experience, that guides the process of conceptual work on new dance, theatre or opera creation.

### **The Anonymous I**

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Badiou equates this “not-knowing” with “a subject of poetic truth”, “an anonymous obstinacy that finds its metaphor in sleep”. In a recent interview, William Forsythe, with whom I collaborated for twelve years, referred to the Buddhist concept of “no-mind” having an important place in his work. (Forsythe, 2003) Dramaturgical process which emanates from this undecided state of consciousness produces a perceptual terrain, an interactive, unfolding field of thought where engagement itself becomes a dance of meaning creation.

*The sensitivity to dance possessed by each and everyone of us comes from the fact that dance answers, after its own fashion, Spinoza’s question: What is a body capable of? It is capable of art, that is, it can be exhibited as native thought. How can we name this emotion that seizes us at this point? . . . I will name this emotion . . . an exact vertigo.*

Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 70

The notion of the void, of nothing, “of the nakedness of concepts”, smacking your body on the floor, etc. this sense of dance has been the underlying and defining current of my work and why I have repeatedly been drawn into the vicinity of this art form.

MICHAEL KLIEN: Maybe it is because dance is always pointing towards the possibility of change . . . towards the unknown, “silently rewriting your vision”, as Badiou says. (2005: 66) It never lets you get comfortable.

### **The Twilight Zone That Surrounds the Hypothetical Unfathomable Center of Living Organisms**

There is an illusive and mysterious quality or resonance which dance seems to manifest which seems to play an active role in the creation and maintenance of living systems such



as a Balinese village or an arts organization in Limerick. After a few days at Daghda I begin to feel a continual presence of the dancing that happens there, like an invisible fabric that touches and envelopes everyone and everything we do. Nietzsche said that dance could be “a new name given to the earth”. (Badiou, 2005: 70) For the French philosopher Alain Badiou it is the embodiment of the principle of “an exact vertigo”. This state between finite and infinite, place and non-place, integration and disintegration seems to be an elemental, regenerative, i.e. “healthy” mode of being in the world.

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*The principle of incompleteness gives Batesonian holism its real power, turning what is a weakness in conventional science into a source of strength. It says, in a nutshell, that mind is not Mind, nor, in principle, can it ever be so. It argues that by definition, tacit knowing can never be rationally expressed. But we can recognize its existence, we can work with it in our attempt to know the world, and in fact we must do so because circuitry, in the cybernetic sense, is the way reality is structured.*

Rodney Donaldson, *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind*

STEVE VALK: Daghda Dance Company has tried to cultivate something like a new ecology of the arts: to see a cultural institution, like a dance company, as the locus and initiator of living processes which begin within the company itself, its internal workings, its everyday life, etc. and then extend into the relationships with its own immediate and not so immediate surroundings. The “vision of dance” we have been referring to in this discussion and the role that “dancing” and “the dance” play at Daghda is one of a constituting principle. Dance within the ecology of Daghda is an active power which generates an undercurrent of corporeal and environmental interconnectivity. It instils a rich and multi-levelled awareness which informs and challenges both the company’s everyday affairs and its engagement with its own emerging future.

#### REFERENCES

- 1) As quoted in Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 2005, p. 123.
- 2) As quoted in Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 2005, p. 59.





# basta! youth collective i got restless . . .



CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# jeffrey gornly of ethics of choreography of

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one

## choreographic report: imaagineering ten commandments

|think: dance as a metaphor for thought

*imaagineering ten commandments . . . What would such a project be? Can one base an ethic on these ten “Thou shalt nots . . .”? or is our global village such that we need a new ground for behaviour today? Do we need commandments that we wish we could keep, or should we recognise and accept those patterns that emerge as rules in our day-to-day behaviour here and now? Are these rules part of a practical code for social living or a purposeful technology for knowing ourselves? Assessing value and belief, context and social contract, this imaginative project compares ethics of non-Christian and non-religious practices, contrasts good intentions and bad habits, and aspires to simplicity and fluidity. Running throughout Public Thinktank we invite contributions from everyone who visits Framemakers, international guests and Limerick citizenry alike.*

*Framemakers Public Thinktank Programme, 2005*

## opening a flexistential idea-space

This project embodied a change in textual practice, moving from dualistic thinking to thinking that takes place in a more populated thoughtfield: flexistentialism.

I chose a number of sources, religious, ethical and anthropological, which would open out a wide and rich field for conversation about values, ethical behaviour, and social living, with the Ten Commandments, being the ethical primer for most native Irish people, as the focal point and launch-pad for the enquiry. These other ethics act as vibrating gravitational bodies of thought, between which our own thinkers/thoughts are held in a dance of mind.

FRAMEMAKERS





- From the Buddhist tradition I sourced “The Ten Precepts” and “The Ten Positive Precepts”. What especially attracted me to these formulations was their wording, which offered a new direction to the prescriptive “Thou shalt not . . .”
- Ma’at was a Goddess of the ancient Egyptian religion KMT (Khemet) signifying balance, truth and (divine) justice who “exemplifies the eternal laws of the universe as Right and Truth”.<sup>1)</sup> Their 40 precepts are framed “I do not . . .”
- In April 2005 I interviewed the Imam of the New York Islamic Cultural Centre. When I asked him to relate the differences he perceived between Islamic Ethical codes and the Judaeo-Christian Commandments, he stated that Islam is essentially the latest and most accurate version of the same religion, and that Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God.
- According to literature of Society for Ethical Culture in New York City, a “supreme ethical rule [is] to elicit the best in oneself and others by drawing out the unique difference that constitutes each self . . . Characteristic of the ethical attitude is the painting, and constant retouching, of ideal portraits of our fellow humans and ourselves and acting toward them, and ourselves, in accordance with those portraits.”<sup>2)</sup>
- I created a matrix formed by comparison and contrast between two cultures: pirate communities of the period 1750–1800, with no hierarchical structure or strict social etiquette, but a tendency towards violence,<sup>3)</sup> and Balinese society, having a “non-cumulative” social tendency, with little violence, but a rigid and complex arrangement of social positions.<sup>4)</sup> This matrix begins to flex our project’s idea-space.
- In my thinking for this project, I reflected on my own feelings of faith and religion. A devout Catholic as a child, I remember an intense sensibility I had for God and his “glue” holding everything together. My overriding feeling was that God loved us “unconditionally, as children”, begging the question whether, like any parent, God might expect us to someday grow up, mature, and make our own way.<sup>5)</sup>

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### **tentative steps into ideospace**

- Many people agreed that while the Ten Commandments as we know them may be perfectly adequate, “we”, meaning society in general, don’t keep these rules.
- Most people professed to have their own private, personal or internal ethic, which was largely summed up in either of two adages: “love others as thyself” and “live and let live”.



- Nonetheless, it was observed that for most Catholic Irish people, the Ten Commandments were firmly embedded in our ethical and social education, to the extent that even if we didn't think much about them, they informed all of our ethical choices.<sup>6)</sup>
- Seadna differentiated two kinds of ethical rule: "real" rules which controlled the behaviour of the agents of an essentially neurotic world; and paternalistic rules that any citizen with commonsense can formulate for themselves. I postulated one more category: Simple rules for a society of "mature" humans.
- We discussed the need for rules for social living. It was generally agreed that these rules were necessary primarily to maintain a stable society, rather than to illuminate a path to enlightenment.<sup>7)</sup>
- In discussing how the Ten Commandments were phrased, we explored the different kinds of rules and their object.<sup>8)</sup> We wondered why with ten clear precepts to follow we still had a society that had generated thousands of laws, and was generating them still. We conjectured that there could be a few very simple and elegant principles that would form the basis for a continually negotiated social conduct.
- Beyond concerns about ethics and social contract, it is important to consider people's ideas of purpose. When I asked local man Donal about this, he responded that the purpose of life was to learn.<sup>9)</sup>

### conclusions?

Most people, consciously or not, have some ethical base for their own behaviour. Our problem, which begs to be solved, is accommodation of these various ethics, which drive human behaviour with its multiplicity of ends and means. A choreography of ethics would seek to create conditions for healthy interplay of different private ethics. It would seek also to induce a state of "dance", which is described by Michael Klein as "that state of excitement in a system wherein change becomes possible", a state of lightness which allows new patterns to activate. This lightness and ease of movement enables a context free of crippling hierarchies of function or status as Bateson describes Bali.<sup>see reference 4)</sup> This state of dance would also be most conducive to exchange between agents: allowing them to move freely between perspectives, their private ethical codes becoming stepping stones to full communicative participation, rather than impediments to contact with other codes, or means of colonisation or consumption of "otherness". "Our world" is where our worlds meet.



**two**

**raw thinking / wild conjecture**

|think: dance — state of excitement where change becomes possible in a system

*Think of society as a human construction, a very sophisticated defence mechanism. Society's restrictions get bred into the cells themselves by a process of selection. And these restrictions become part of the self-regulating feedback in society's governing system. There's a serious question whether humans actually can break out of their self-regulated pattern. It takes audacious methods indeed to explore beyond that pattern.*

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Frank Herbert, *Destination: Void*

I propose a choreography of ethics elaborated as a series of spaces or rooms. In an effort to move beyond pure instruction, I suggest that we account for types of activity desirable in an ethical 4th dimension, and to propose environments conducive to particular uses of bodymind mindbody.<sup>10)</sup>

*Dance does not create or use space but discloses it as a meaningful situation . . . does not diligently conduct a building project of the world, but rather stops mechanical building and begins a poetic living — a hearing and sharing the common being-in-the-world with the creatures of the world.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

A most straightforward and flexible manner in which to begin would be, I feel, to imagine spaces in which these activities, these uses of self, may accommodate their own iteration by separate agents.

*Dance . . . can be comprehended as laying out a world in its involvement with being.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

I believe, too, that in designing these spaces we may allow for contexts in which humans dovetail their activity with that total activity of biosphere in what we may call an “ecology”.





*Can you imagine a species whose everyday existence depends on ethical decisions. Depends, mark you. I don't understand their system yet . . . Each one of them is a universe . . . For them thought is a living tangible force.*

Philip Mann, *The Eye of the Queen*

I believe it is important to conceive of such a way of life: ethics in a recursive trinity with aesthetics and ecology, as the way of life.

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In this wise, our efforts would be directed towards maintaining certain ethical principles which enable life to be meaningful and healthful, which enable meaningful and healthful communication; for with a collapse of ethical living, viability of a human universe collapses also, into an entropy of solipsism, decay, depravity and a mania for distraction that bespeaks only a compulsion to disguise a base insignificance and lack of meaning. I propose this Buddhist precept be true:

*One's thoughts control one's destiny . . .  
A single thought can destroy or save a world.*

The question of a choreography of ethics thus becomes one of social choreography, and inhabits a domain of architects, planners, designers, developers, builders. It becomes an activity oriented around relationship and communication, involving all of us, curators of society — our social sculpture —, in various roles as citizen artist/healer, teacher/carer, parent/advocate, producer/creator, dancer/choreographer.

### three

#### strange attractors in a morphogenetic field

*. . . organizing fields within the developing organism, called morphogenetic fields. These fields contain, as it were, invisible plans or blueprints for the various organs and for the organism as a whole. In mathematical models of morphogenetic fields, the goals of morphogenetic process are represented as attractors. These attractors lie within "basins of attraction" in a multidimensional phase space, and draw the developing organism towards developmental aims.*

Rupert Sheldrake, *The Sense of Being Stared at*<sup>11)</sup>



*. . . the subject matter of the new dance orientations . . . is about a change in understanding of reality, . . . new deep ecological ethics where the philosophical horizon is formed by the shared participation in being-in-the-world.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

What qualities might attain to or be valued in this ethical space of dance?

**techné** “Monkey see, monkey do.” In a karaoke culture such as ours, where transmission of memes is by mimicry, duplication and adaptation, our choreography of ethics can expect to be embodied and distributed by exemplars: people who, to remix Kirsi Monni, employ *techné*:

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*Techne . . . human mode of knowing . . . / dancer’s . . . bodily knowledge. Techne is grounded on the practice of bodily awareness. It can be outlined as:*

- (i) a research of the body’s (and mind’s) functional intelligence . . . (Asking questions such as how a person moves, what sense and reason guides it?);*
- (ii) the ability to listen and perceive the lived body experience and bodily memory;*
- (iii) . . . practice of certain non-reacting and non-acting, which brings the dancer away from conventional body (and mind) instrumentalism to functionally perceptive, unique here-moment and body-mind integrity.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

**on “purpose”** I quote briefly from Gregory Bateson. I suggest you read the whole article.

*I am guided in my perception by purposes . . . Consciousness . . . is organized in terms of purpose. It is a short-cut device to enable you to get quickly to what you want; not to act with maximum wisdom in order to live, but to follow the shortest logical or causal path to get what you next want, which may be dinner; (Wisdom I take to be the knowledge of the larger interactive system) . . . what worries me is the addition of modern technology to the old system . . . Conscious purpose is now empowered to upset the balances of the body, of society, and of the biological world around us. A pathology — a loss of balance — is threatened.*

Gregory Bateson, *Conscious Purpose Versus Nature*<sup>12)</sup>



How do we short circuit our natural purposive instinct, which has driven our evolution as a tool-building species? In a world of “actors”, purpose — “motivation” is the driver. Dancers, however, may be moved by something other. Let’s say intuition, our internal navigation system for entering the “unknown”.

**intuition: social dreaming matrix** We consider our quest for knowledge, and our accumulation of information by means of scientific observation exploration dissection and experimentation, to be expressive of our highest achievement, our noblest purpose. However, our quest to “know” disguises strategies that embody a desire to dominate coerce and control — “divide and conquer”; our probes — scalpel, electron microscope, stopwatch, drill — are invasive, divisive, and, as quantum physics has discovered, ultimately misleading.

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*. . . one cannot eventually separate matter and spirit, body and intellect without executing the life.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

Lawren Bale has argued<sup>13</sup>) that our current model of stewardship over the natural world, i.e. tagging tracking counting and managing species, is merely a new iteration of an old strategy of husbandry, dating back to Genesis. I suspect this desire to make familiar the strange is perhaps related to unarticulated fears about that most important of unknown quantities — ourselves. A choreography of ethics must provide for our innate curiosity by elaborating models with which we can navigate “unknown”, and cultivate our ability to live in a world replete with “unknown”: a humble admission of ignorance, a reappraisal of our notion of primacy among creatures, and a commitment to stop trying to “penetrate” mysteries of life, while also encouraging production of self-knowledge.

Social dreaming, written about elsewhere in this publication, is one such choreographic tool. Taking place in a Social Dreaming Matrix, i.e. womb, this choreography of dreams, thought and communication is precisely a fine-tuning of intuition: allowing the new, the unknown, what W. Gordon Lawrence calls the “unthought known”, to grow. In a safe and unpersonal context, intelligence about ourselves and our system/s is cultivated from raw thinking material of our unconscious.





**fourth dimensionality** Soul: ultimate strange attractor.

*All our tool making implies our belief in an ultimate tool. That tool is the flying saucer, or the soul, exteriorized in three-dimensional space. The body can become an internalized holographic object embedded in a solid-state, hyperdimensional matrix that is eternal, so that we each wander through a true Elysium.*

Terence Mackenna, *New Maps of Hyperspace*

When I watch a Lovespotters performance, people with Downs' Syndrome and Autism dancing, I fancy that what I see is such an exteriorization of soul. I "see" them project their love/joy/soul outwards onto the faces and bodies of friends family supporters — audience — and swimdance within their fourth dimension of soul — their joy, their love.

*Body is all over / in the walls on people's faces / . . . /  
my body is a shared place*

Elena Gianotti, *Notes for Einem . . .*

Only, perhaps, our intuition, disciplined through an art of time, through spontaneity, can dance discovery of soul, which does not lurk somewhere within us, but is to be recognized in systems within which we dance.

**centredness** Bodyminds dance in relation to each other in a flexistential field. They relate from far within themselves, centre to centre. Imagine this choreography of minded bodies, based on a

*. . . three-fold property possessed by every consciousness:*

*(i) of centring everything partially upon itself;*

*(ii) of being able to centre upon itself constantly;*

*and (iii) of being brought more by this very super-centration into association with all the other centres surrounding it.*

Teilhard de Chardin, *Beyond the Collective: The Hyperpersonal, in The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. by Bernard Wall





**slow is a new punk** A new discipline of time:

*practice of certain non-reacting and non-acting, which brings the dancer away from conventional body (and mind) instrumentalism to functionally perceptive, unique here-moment and body-mind integrity.*

Kirsi Monni, *About the Sense and Meaning in Dance*

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Slow down, stop; stillness, look around. Power of *presence* in our high-impact car-crash culture is not to be underestimated. It is no longer an anachronism nor a luxury to take our time. It is a necessity.

**“relating means moving”**<sup>14</sup>) Communication implies a volunteering of self into new possibilities for configuration, a willingness to move into a new position in order to stay with a relationship.

**choreonautics** A new discipline, inhabited and developed by those who dance with one foot inside and one outside a system.

*Choreograph (v.): to arrange relations between bodies  
in time and space*

*Choreography (v.): act of framing relations between bodies;  
“a way of seeing the world”*

*Choreography (n.): result of any of these actions*

*Choreography (n.): a dynamic constellation of any kind,  
consciously created or not, self-organising or super-imposed*

*Choreography (n.): order observed . . . , exchange of forces;  
a process that has an observable or observed embodied order*

*Choreograph (v.): to recognize such an order*

*Choreography (v.): act of interfering with or negotiating  
such an order*

Michael Klien and Jeffrey Gormly, *What is Choreography*

Choreonauts are bodies in time and space, witnessing, framing, interfering with and negotiating dynamic constellations of which they themselves are a part. Choreonauts rely on intuition to dissolve dualities of subject and object, and resolve multiply-framed



partial images of a systemic whole which is unknowable by we subjects of that true unknown, the universe.

Use of this morphogenetic field as a choreographic means desires us to project these strange attractors, strong ideas that draw us to them like gravity wells of planetary presences, into a space within which our dance can take place. This space may be bound by space, time or context. We heavenly bodies are held in suspension between around among these strange attractors. We do not land on any particular planet, we are not obliged to make our commitment to one ideal or another, but rather to preserve a lightness in our thoughtful movement that allows us to negotiate with grace and gravity our paths through this morphogenetic field, our living with change in this morphogenetic field.

#### four

#### endfootnote: avant-gardening

*mapped be consciousness and aesthetics shall surface / questions ask. who answers?  
endless the process. exploratory the framemakers*

*Cut-Up, Limerick, 2004*

*Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real.*

Iris Murdoch

*we are an ordinary mind*

*play strong. play for real. it's a game but the stakes are high. abandon hope all ye who enter here. what's left after hope? (faith?) mind answers itself. mind at work: pople carry thought(s) around a room . . . what (why?) is a thought that thinks itself? How are thoughts that think a mind? . . . an ordinary mind. Is a mind so unusual? . . . ask itself. think dance with hands feet body in mind. frame it. move on. Leave a trace. sediments form a bed for growth. dig in. move on . . .*

*electricity. join your body and move in mind. there are ehoes. thoughts detach and grow new paths to play out mind, planting seeds for fresh growth, avant-gardeners cultivate ideas in an ecology of mind. stop. think. (to think, to dream . . .) sleep on it. do something. there are people all around; space stuff specklestuff all around locked in forms we think we know. nerves take root and grow out into reach stretch out into contact, and feedback, feedback, and reality; |think: (resist|dance)| with a lightness, that is of dance, a naievety that is of dance, a desire*

*for joy, that is of dance, dance, dance, an economics of fleibility, that is dance. And when the mind rests, dreams are made to dance. the city is your stage. landscape is your stage. join your bdy and we move at the speed of thought. (sound of where-you-are | sound of |think: life|) evolving unconscious paths to cross, creating possibility, growing through growing pains. Here comes society. Society means everyone. Everyone an artist.*

Jeffrey Gormly, *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind: The Book*

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- 1) Source: Taped lecture by Hunter Adams. An interesting coincidence was that my source for this material describes the expulsion of a large number of Semites from Egypt for lawlessness. This Exodus led the Semites to eventually formulate their own social ethic — The Ten Commandments — as if this had become necessary to their survival as a people. (see reference <sup>5</sup>)
- 2) A key facet of this thinking was the notion of “the ‘reality-producing functions of the mind’ . . . We can represent that reality out there because the structure of our minds has been shaped by the same forces that produced [that reality] . . . our sense of the diversity and the unity of the universe and of the relational [and so ethical] nature of human experience were reflections of a larger reality . . . termed ‘transcendent’. The mind could read off that reality because it was structured to be ‘reality-producing’.” *A Concept Map for Ethical Culture: Towards Philosophical Consensus*, a statement of the National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union.
- 3) Pirates created a world of their own making, where they had “the choice in themselves” — a world of solidarity and fraternity, where they shared the risks and gains of life at sea, made decisions collectively and seized their life for themselves in the present, denying its use to the merchants as a tool for the accumulation of dead property.  
*Every Man has a Vote in Affairs of Moment; has equal Title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquors, at any Time seized, and may use them at Pleasure, unless a Scarcity make it necessary, for the Good of all, to vote a Retrenchment.*  
 Daniel Defoe (Captain Charles Johnson), *A General History of the Pyrates*  
*Every man had as much say as the captain and each man carried his own weapons in his blanket.*  
 Dutch Governor of Mauritius  
 The harshness of life at sea made mutual aid into a simple survival tactic:  
*I . . . hope, as ye have the bravery to assert your liberty, you will be as unanimous in the preserving it and stand by me in what shall be expedient for the good of all; All should be held in common and the particular avarice of no one should defraud the public. Since we have unanimously resolved to seize upon and defend our liberty . . . , I am under an obligation to recommend to you a brotherly love to each other; the banishment of all private piques and grudges, and a strict agreement and harmony among ourselves. In throwing off the yoke of tyranny, of which that speaks an abhorrence, I hope none will follow the example of the tyrants and turn his back upon justice; for when equity is trod underfoot, misery, confusion and mutual distrust naturally follow. The trading for those of our own species could never be agreeable to the eyes of divine justice; no man has power of the liberty of another. . . . I have not exempted my neck from the galling yoke of slavery and asserted my own liberty, to enslave others.*  
 Words of Captain Misson, as recorded by Daniel Defoe (op. cit.)
- 4) *The perhaps basically human tendency towards cumulative personal interaction is . . . muted. It is possible that some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for climax . . . It is immediately clear to any visitor to Bali that the driving force for cultural activity is not either acquisitiveness or crude physiological need . . . There are very few Balinese who have the idea of steadily maximising their wealth or property. It is common to find that activity, rather than being purposive, i.e. aimed at some deferred goal, is valued for itself . . . Instead of deferred purpose there is an immediate an immanent satisfaction in performing beautifully, with everybody else, that which it is correct to perform in each particular context . . . there is such misfortune inherent in the loss of group membership that the threat of this loss is one of the most serious sanctions in the culture . . . many Balinese actions are articulately accounted for in sociological terms rather than in terms of individual goals or values . . . offence is felt to be against the order and natural structure of the universe rather than against the actual person offended. The offender . . . is not blamed for anything worse than stupidity and clumsiness . . . these patterns which define correct and permissible behaviour are exceedingly complex . . . and that the individual Balinese has continual anxiety lest he make an error . . . the individual Balinese is forever picking his way, like a tightrope walker, afraid at any moment lest he make some misstep.*  
 Gregory Bateson, *Bali: The Value System of a Steady State*, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*



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- 5) This was reinforced by an anecdote recounted by Seadna: A man and a priest were conversing, and the man was asking the priest: “What kind of sins do you get in the confessions?” Of course, the priest declined to answer, referring to the confidentiality of the confessional. The man insisted, however, until finally the priest said: “One thing I can tell you is that people never grow up.”
- 6) I did not interrogate, however, whether people felt they made many informed ethical choices in the course of their everyday lives. The question of having choice but not having or making the time and space to exercise that choice, is, I believe, a key one.
- 7) *From a choreographic point of view commandments act as simple rules given to the individual, that when played out in the social sphere create a more-or-less “liveable” society. It can somewhat be seen as a survival mechanism, a code of conduct that guarantees survival on a larger organisational sphere than the individual. If a commandment would say “Kill thy neighbour” — the survival of the society as a whole would be rather short.*  
Michael, choreographer
- 8) *There are rules about actions, e.g. robbery, adultery that can be prohibited: Ok. But “coveting” for instance, which is an internal/emotional response, can we rule against that? We can’t stop people from being greedy, but we can prevent them acting out of greed. Rules that should go into law should be those which affect others.*  
Seadna
- 9) Donal subsequently contributed this note: “Our greatest glory consists . . . ‘Not in never falling / But in rising every time we fall’.”
- 10) I propose we categorically end notional separation between body and mind and propose these terms bodymind and mindbody to identify human ethical agency.
- 11) *First, morphogenetic fields work by imposing patterns or structures on otherwise random or indeterminate processes in the systems under their control. Second, they contain attractors, which draw systems under their influence towards future goals. Third, they evolve, along with living organisms themselves. The morphic fields of all species have history, and contain inherent memory given by the process I call morphic resonance . . . Morphic resonance works across space and time, from the past to the present. Through morphic resonance, each member of a species both draws upon and contributes to a collective memory of the species. (. . .) Morphogenetic fields are part of a larger class of fields, called morphic fields, all of which contain inherent memory given by morphic resonance. Morphic fields also underlie our perceptions, thoughts and other mental processes. The morphic fields of mental activities are called mental fields. Through mental fields, the extended mind reaches out into the environment through attention and intention, and connects with other members of social groups.*  
Rupert Sheldrake, *The Sense of Being Stared at*  
(see *A New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, 1981, *The Presence of the Past. Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature*, 1988, and *The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God*, 1991, all by Rupert Sheldrake)
- 12) Gregory Bateson, *Conscious Purpose Versus Nature*, lecture to the London Conference on the Dialectics of Liberation, July 1967. Reprinted in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*.
- 13) At *Framemakers*, 2005.
- 14) This is a choreographic instruction/guideline from Michael Klien’s *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind*, Daghdha Dance Company, 2004–2007.

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# robin parmar

# complementarity: an archipelago

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*The opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth is usually another profound truth.*

Niels Bohr<sup>1)</sup>

## Introduction

An archipelago is a sea containing scattered islands. I use this term to mean a scattering of texts embedded in a particular context; a cluster without overt pattern but with some as-yet-not-fully-determined connectivity. The context the reader brings to this collection is the axis about which the islands spin.

From quantum mechanics we know that particles also act as waves, depending on what we are observing. We can see light or an electron in one or the other aspect, but to get a full appreciation of their characteristics we need to balance both concepts in our mind at the same time. Niels Bohr called this duality *complementarity*.

This document is an archipelago designed to explore certain creative forces. It is a generative system embedded in a process greater than itself. It is wired; it is telegraphic; it is sound.

## Quantum Foam

To start with, let's combine two things we know into a third thing which seems impossible, but is nevertheless true.

The first thing we know is that nothing cannot come from something. This principle is embodied in several physical laws, for example the law of conservation of energy. To wit, the total amount of energy in an isolated system remains constant. Energy (which is equivalent to matter) can neither be created nor destroyed.

The second thing we know is the Heisenberg uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics. This states that certain paired properties of elementary particles cannot be

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measured with arbitrary precision. For example, the more we can say about a particle's momentum (where it is travelling and how fast) the less we can be sure about its position.

Planck's constant is a precise value used to quantify this interaction. In Joule seconds (J s) this value is  $6.626\ 0693 \times 10^{-34}$ . This is a profound number, representing exactly how unknowable the universe is.<sup>2)</sup>

At extremely small distances and time scales the uncertainty principle allows for a particle and its corresponding anti-particle to come into being, so long as they immediately annihilate again, thus preserving conservation laws on a higher scale. Look at a region of space and there may be nothing there. But look again closer and you will see a chaotic turbulence of particles being born, living and dying. This is known as *quantum foam*, the stormy sea of nothing within and around everything.

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## Numbers in the Dark

Through statistics we know exactly how unknowable Planck's constant is. The *standard uncertainty* is  $0.000\ 0011 \times 10^{-34}$  J s. The digits we know with exactitude are 662606.

When my brother and I were very young, we used to stay up after bedtime and scare each other with spooky stories. I don't remember any of these and don't recall being too scared by them. (My nightmares of hordes of atomic bombers filling the skies were always more terrifying.) Except that sometimes, as an incantation, one or the other of us would chant the following numbers as a prelude to terror: "606 . . . 606 . . . 606 . . ."

Did we recite those numbers because we somehow knew they represented the limits of our knowledge of the universe? Did our desire to be scared by the unknown extend to being scared by the very principle of uncertainty? Or were we secretly happy (as those who tell scary stories are happy to be scared) to inhabit a world in which unknown and unknowable things could exist?

## The Sound of Music

Timbre is an expression of the quality of a sound. It is what allows us to distinguish between different musical instruments, even if they are playing the same pitch at the same amplitude. As music is a time-based medium it follows that timbre changes over time.

If we want to know the sound of music at a particular moment, we need to take a slice through the changing spectra and produce a frequency spectrum, a map of the





intensity of each frequency of sound. But frequency itself is the rate at which the sound wave oscillates over time.

So, the more precise we make the time measurement, the less we can say about the frequency. If we want to be arbitrarily precise, the frequencies themselves effervesce and disappear into the space between things. If you listen closely you will hear the chaotic sound of waves being born, living and dying in this space. All that is left here is noise, the remainder after all else has been subtracted.

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### **The Pigeonhole Principle**

Last week I was at a house-warming party, a dynamic engagement of people in a room. Some people had met each other previously, some had not. We can state that being acquainted is a symmetric non-reflexive relationship. The symmetry comes from the fact that if I am acquainted with you, you are acquainted with me. The non-reflexivity is due to the fact that one acquaintance relationship is not the same as another.

The Pigeonhole Principle states that if there are  $N$  pigeonholes and you have  $M$  pigeons (where  $M$  is greater than  $N$ ), there will be a hole with more than one pigeon.

From this apparently obvious principle, we can conclude that there are two people in the room with exactly the same number of acquaintances.<sup>3)</sup>

Simple statements, when combined, can lead to surprising conclusions.

### **Musical Chairs**

When I was six I played the following game at a friend's birthday party. A number of children stood around a circle of chairs. Someone's parent put a record on the player and the music started. At this cue the children walked in a circle around the chairs. Suddenly, the tone arm was lifted and the music stopped. All of us scrambled for a chair, leaving one child standing. This person left the circle, taking a chair with them. We continued this game until there was only one child remaining, who was subsequently declared "the winner".

This game works only if, for each round, there are  $M$  children and  $N$  chairs, where  $M$  is greater than  $N$ .

In German this game is known as *Reise nach Jerusalem* or "Journey to Jerusalem". In Romanian the name translates as "Birdie, Move Your Nest". In Swedish it is played as "The Whole Sea Is Storming".<sup>4)</sup>





## People are Different Sizes

In *A Pattern Language* Christopher Alexander et al. deconstructed our urban environment into 253 patterns, ranging from large-scale interactions at the city and state level to specific recommendations for arranging light, plants and furniture in the home. Pattern 1, Independent Regions, states that “Metropolitan regions will not come to balance until each one is small and autonomous enough to be an independent sphere of culture”.<sup>5)</sup>

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Section 251, *Different Chairs*, warns “People are different sizes; they sit in different ways. And yet there is a tendency in modern times to make all chairs alike”.<sup>6)</sup>

Alexander’s work has been widely read, commented upon and praised, this section not excluded. Yet has no-one noticed that one thing we do not lack for is chairs? Is it not true that every designer hatched from any of the myriad of schools dedicated to the task firstly and lastly makes a chair? In considering their twenty-fifth anniversary, Taschen published an entire book of chairs, one thousand of them as the title attests.<sup>7)</sup> Take a sub-category, say the folding chair, and you can buy a poster containing 196 different models.<sup>8)</sup> Want to re-upholster a chair in funky designs?<sup>9)</sup> Make a Welsh stick chair?<sup>10)</sup> Rethink culture through the form of the chair?<sup>11)</sup> Well, you can.

It could be said that the chair is the totemic design object. So why are they all so uncomfortable? Perhaps because a bit of irritation is good for us.

I hope you are reading this sitting down.

## Telegraph Rock

In 1978 Wire released the album *Chairs Missing*, a radical collision of experimental recording techniques, punk energy, enigmatic lyrics and minimalism. The band members were joined by producer Mike Thorne, who became both an unwitting accomplice and a willing foil to the band.

*A wire consists of one or more filaments of flexible metal, woven together to increase strength.*

Thorne writes about how the recording process was often based on unexpected interactions between sound systems:

The guitar solo in *Sand in My Joints* is played by Colin and Bruce both through the ring modulator on the classic Synthi AKS. Unless there is a sound present at each of the two inputs to this device, nothing comes out. When there are, the single final sound is





one modulated by the other. It was a very social occasion for the two of them.<sup>12)</sup> As in any social structure, there were conflicts within Wire, but these were incorporated into their operations in a manner unlike other rock groups. When drum machines began to dominate the recordings, the drummer retired to farming. Hence the group retired a letter, becoming Wire. The group has disbanded twice and a multitude of solo, internal and external collaborations have arisen from these voids. The existence of Wire permits the concept of the non-existence of Wire, in which creative energies can flow.

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*A wire is often used as a conductor of electricity, a channel of flow for energy from a high to low potential zone.*

Wire are more a game system than a band. Their lyrics are acrostics; the song titles are jokes and missing links; the live shows are performance art in place of rock 'n' roll. Wire are not so much about playing songs as they are about *playing at* songs. They don't dictate but rather telegraph intent.

Try to pin them down and you won't know where they are going. Determine their next path and you'll discover you don't know where they are right now. They define themselves by what is absent (the chair is missing) and question endlessly.<sup>13)</sup> "Is it too late to change my mind?" they repeat excitedly as *Chairs Missing* comes to an end.

To wire is to send a message over the telegraph system. To telegraph is to unwittingly indicate one's intention, without explicit statement.

## The Observer Pattern

The field of software engineering has taken on board the idea of patterns as exemplified by Alexander. *Design Patterns*, written by the so-called Gang of Four, popularised the concept of finding generally applicable solutions for commonly occurring problems in computer programming and design.<sup>14)</sup>

A design pattern is not a specific code implementation but rather a way of describing commonly encountered relationships, so that when you see a similar pattern later (at a party, for instance), you will discover that you are already acquainted with it.

The *observer pattern* describes a situation where one or more observers are watching a subject, waiting for a particular event. Following the detection of this event they will generally perform some action. In order to implement this pattern, one must modify the subject so that it can track the observers. The act of observing changes that which is observed. Even more, the very possibility of future observation requires that the subject be structurally and functionally different from an object that will never be observed.



As subjects ourselves, consciousness is our preparation for this always-fulfilled potential. We have consciousness only because we are aware of the observer pattern and recognise that we are subject to it.

### Cybernetic Solipsism

In 1937 Claude Shannon's landmark paper on Boolean algebra made possible a rigorous application of electromechanical relays (and later, computer circuits) to solving algebra problems. A decade later, working from some ideas of Norbert Wiener, he laid the foundation for information theory. Other significant papers developed cryptography and digital sampling theory. It may not be too extravagant to call Shannon the father of the computer age.

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But it doesn't end there. Shannon had a strong interest in games, was an expert juggler and avid unicyclist. He created a machine to solve the Rubik's cube, built a motorised pogo-stick and wrote famed papers on chess programmes.

In the early fifties Shannon built "the Ultimate Machine". As described by Arthur C. Clarke, this was a simple wooden box with a switch on one side. On triggering the switch a mechanical buzzing is heard. The lid opens and a hand slowly emerges, reaches down, turns off the switch, and returns to the box. The lid closes and the box is silent once more.<sup>15)</sup>

We turn the machine on so it can turn itself off. This is a mechanism for changing our mind.

Out of nothing something is born, lives, dies, goes back to nothing.

### Suggestions for Further Research

Find a chair that fits your body by visiting as many stores as possible. Collect all of the chairs you find along the way. Put these in a room and invite people to sit on them. Collect all of the people who fit the chairs.

Create a device for playing a song. This device should consist of at least three people and at least three means of sound production. As many possible interactions between people and production methods should be encouraged over a time span no less than three weeks. Call this device a band; give it a clever name.

Invent a game to be played by a varied group of people at a party. This should have the following properties: there are  $M$  of one thing and  $N$  of another,  $M$  is greater than



N, the game should be played in rounds, at least one item should be eliminated each round. Pigeons are optional.

Design a T-shirt using Planck's constant and a pithy phrase. Market this at university book stores and organic food markets.

A complement is something which makes the original complete. A compliment is an expression of praise, congratulation or encouragement. As often as possible in your daily discourse, confuse these two terms. Stop this process only once you are challenged or corrected.

Build one thousand Ultimate Machines. Place these in a room, arranged so that each can reach the switch of the next. Flip the first switch.

Find the emptiest, quietest space possible and stare into the void. Try to see the particles dancing there. Sing along to their noise.

### Postscript

*The absolute rule is to give back more than you were given. Never less, always more. The absolute rule of thought is to give back the world as it was given to us — unintelligible. And, if possible, to render it a little more unintelligible.*

Jean Baudrillard<sup>16)</sup>

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## COMPLEMENTARITY: AN ARCHIPELAGO

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## CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# alan n. shapiro

## star trek, lost, blade runner, 2001

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### Star Trek

Most scientists, academics, and journalists who write about Star Trek claim to be fans and lovers of the various Starfleet Captains and their crews. But their customary methodologies function to deny to Star Trek its true originality as the creator of a realityshaping science fiction that formatively influences culture, ideas, technologies, and even hard sciences like physics. Some book authors repeat the well-worn truism that Star Trek is a great modern mythology. Others follow the paradigm of the Science of Star Trek, substituting their own particular field of expertise for the word Science in that formula. This is exactly the opposite of clearing a path to the perception that Star Trek actively affects technoscience and techno-culture. It holds Star Trek in the weaker position of being tested against an established body of knowledge to see if it measures up on a scale of feasibility or correctness. The possibility that Star Trek is the lively initiator of a new real is thereby eliminated in advance.

What is the essence of Star Trek as a vigorously imprinting science fiction is for us a question still to be answered. To gain knowledge about something that we instinctively sense to be inaugural or instituting, we must be willing to lose something that we already know with systematic certainty, to voluntarily dispose of erudition that we acquired with the instruments of fixed scholarly categories. We must stay keenly aware of the elusiveness of the object under study and the sought after apprehension. We must strive to see the object of the investigation as non-comparable with what we already know, and non-exchangeable in the currency of existing wisdom. Our goal is to learn Star Trek's internal and underlying logic. As a singularity, Star Trek can only be grasped through an exploration that is carried out in Star Trek's own terms. But we ironically do not know at the outset what these own terms are. Acknowledging this paradox leaves us with a seemingly daunting task, but it remains possible to take a few intuitions or direct perceptions as our starting point. We can begin from recognition of the core questions that are asked by others who write about Star Trek.

FRAMEMAKERS





There are two burning intellectual questions about Star Trek that pervade the existing literature and also engage us here. Why is Star Trek so popular? What are we to make of Star Trek's futuristic technologies? Each of these two questions is addressed by a corresponding series of books "about Star Trek" which either offers a recurrent answer ("Star Trek is a superb mythology") or employs an inherited methodological prototype ("The Science of Star Trek") that we find to be unsatisfactory. For the present study, not only is each of the two questions independently interesting, but we also search for an adequate answer to the first question in order to fruitfully answer the second one. We love Star Trek and we are technologists. We inhabit a technological lifeworld. If we are able to understand why we love Star Trek — to name certain basic principles, artistic and ethical values, or a single intricate thread within its "universe" that captures our adherence as true fans — then it will become clear what our attitude towards Star Trek's "imaginary" technologies should be. This is simply a matter of being consciously consistent. It is also critically important for our near future in late capitalist societies. Star Trek's futuristic technologies are our own twenty-first century technologies in development. When we have comprehended exactly why we believe in Star Trek — what the moral, aesthetic, philosophical, and techno-scientific grounding of our partisanship really is — then we will know exactly which tenets to reapply to our work as technologists, media practitioners, electronic artists, or thinkers about technology.

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Just as literary criticism deals with forms and rhetorical devices such as irony, parody, and synecdoche, we speak of technological tropes such as the accident of virtual reality, the genetic code, software instantiation, or technologies of disappearance. The latter phrase has three separate meanings for the current inquiry. First, the major Star Trek technologies, as they are habitually envisioned, are technologies of disappearance in a literal and striking way. In transporter beaming, I disappear here and reappear there. In Holodeck virtual reality, I disappear from the physical into the virtual realm. In warp speed, the spaceship disappears from normal spacetime into the flash of faster-than-light speed. In time travel or sudden spatial displacement, there is usually a passage through a wormhole, portal, or stargate. Techno-cultural developments of the twenty-first century and beyond increasingly entail the leaving behind of corporeal existence to enter an alternate reality, such as an android body or online VR environment.

The second meaning of the title phrase of this book is a negative, critical theory sense. To write about "technologies of disappearance" is also to engage in a critique of the mainstream ways in which hypermodern technologies are conceived and designed. Human subjectivity and perception disappear into the organ-substituting imaging appa-



ratures of television, cinema, virtual reality, and real-time telecommunications. Classical time and space disappear into the compression of audiovisual memory implants and designer spacetimes. Human indivisibility disappears into cloning and genetic sequencing systems. The modernist pledge of scientific objectivity and the high valuation of “truth” disappear into incessant techno-scientific pursuit of techno-culture’s ends. Our consideration of the theoretical physics of the transporter, warp drive, time travel, and parallel universes will show that even “hard science” is to an augmenting degree driven by the demands of hyperreal science fictional culture. Theories get bent to conform to the wishes of an eager techno-cultural public that desperately wants acceleration in the coming to fruition of the technologies that will “make Star Trek real”. Here too there is movement from devotion to a set of immutable laws to a game with its own set of rules. In this case, the theoretical physicist player declares victory when he determines that the rules do not “rule out” the given futuristic technology as possible.

Yet the term “technologies of disappearance” has a third, more hopeful and affirmative, meaning for us. These technologies bring us into the proximity of new opportunities for symbolic exchange and duality within uncertainty that contest the prevailing order of endless signification and one-way economic accumulation. This mode of seduction is not to be found in reclaiming the modernist depths of “truth”, but rather on the superficial level of artifice, illusion, disappearance and reappearance. Such possibilities of reversal must be summoned into being or teased out from the standard transactions of the hypermodern condition. They are implicit in the quantum physics discovery of subatomic “virtual” particles that permanently pop into and out of existence. Disappearance is a strategy of feeling, resistance, and transformation that turns aside the intended primary uses of technologies and unpacks their alternative and creative secondary effects. It seeks alliance with the technological object that is striving through defiance and wily moves to achieve its own objecthood. I must first disappear from myself, sojourn with singularities and recognize the radical other, to have some chance to ultimately reach an indirect liberatory opening onto subjecthood.

### Lost

For the contemporary psychosocial cultural imagination, flight is a sense-framing tangible metaphor enlivened by the landmark stories of aeronautical and astronautical history that stands for the courageous journey to face the truth of who one really is, or the challenge of strengthening the contingent condition of being suspended between life

and death into a sustained airborne existential passage. In her dreams and behavioral patterns, the child who was oppressed under the circumstances of psychological and mental abuse within her family flees. But as maturation and spiritual growth progress, escape evolves into the majestically beautiful achievement of getting one's plane off the ground and into viable flight. The original situation of the underdog or rebel — whose numbers are swelling fast in an increasingly dysfunctional society — is like that of the android replicants in the classic science fiction film *Blade Runner* (1982) who have only a four-year life span. “How to stay alive?” — beyond the time-limit of one's internal death sentence self-destruct program, or even short-term knowledge-avoiding survival strategy — is the haunting question posed by the last surviving escaped Nexus-6 replicant Roy Batty. My precognition is that — having entered the twenty-first century — creative outsiders like writers, artists, bohemians, punks, and many others will no longer find themselves being in such dire straits as before. Our plight is no longer so hopeless. The incomparable loveliness of successful flight is within our reach, and there is a kind of real celestial pull towards this elegant victory. Some of the great aviation pioneers of the twentieth century like Charles Lindbergh and John Glenn will be our guides to elaborating a genealogy of the inauguration of worldviews emblemized by famous flights and crashes leading up to the potentially re-enchanting Crash Out of Globalization and Into the World of the Present.

The great philosopher Jacques Derrida, in a book like *Writing and Difference*, brought academic attention to writers on the margins like Antonin Artaud and Georges Bataille who wrote forcefully about their experience of radical difference. Leftist cultural theory in general has been fascinated by figures of the literary-artistic avant-garde who went all the way to the edges of human self-experimentation: William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Kathy Acker, Samuel Beckett and so on. Although it is from Derrida and someone like *Semiotext(e)* book publisher Sylvère Lotringer that I learnt to place such a high value on écriture and textualité, my project is to consider selected “texts” in the American mainstream as instances of writing that aspires to the (Heideggerian) authenticity of existence in the sense that other humanities scholars influenced by Old Europe French-German thinking have reserved only for an elected group of haute culture club members. In the present study, the memoirs of Charles A. “Lucky Lindy” Lindbergh and the flight report and air-ground communiqués of Marine Lt. Colonel John H. Glenn, Jr. (and the episodes of the television program *Lost* itself) are among the textual artefacts under examination. I demonstrate that great achievements which have been canonized in the American cultural psyche in the simulated mode of spectacular heroism were — as bio-



graphical stories truly lived by their protagonists — extreme adventures best understood through a post-academic form of deconstruction. The strategem in my video game is to further radicalize the leading edge of literary theory yet go mainstream at the same time.

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Using celebrated and notorious flights as embodied metaphors, I chart five successive worldviews of the West: universe, cosmos, globe, plate, and world. Charles Lindbergh's transoceanic solo flight from Long Island, New York to Paris in 1927 symbolically linked the legacies of two eighteenth-century modernist-democratic political revolutions. The universe is also a primary field of investigation of science, as exemplified by astrophysics. In 1961, Air Force Major Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics circled the planet one single time in a short-lived triumph for the worldview of cosmos. In the Marxist-Leninist or Christian-millenarian narrative, the planetwide extension of a system of order and harmony is the prelude to the coming of Paradise. John Glenn's authentically heroic orbital flight in 1962 captures the moment of the crossing over of universal liberal capitalism into monopolistic-oligarchical top-down capitalist globalization. The hijacked flight of terrorists crashing two jetliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 is the accident of globalization. Following that catastrophe, the cowboy Faux President/Commander in Chief of Real and Baudrillardian-Orwellian Hyperreal Wars orders a retreat to the pre-Magellanic belief that the world is flat. George Walker "Dubya" Bush contrives a reactionary-obscurantist platform resting on the tripod base of the leftover worldviews of universe, cosmos and globe. This optical illusion corresponds to the vista of the Earth as a flat plate that Neil A. Armstrong and Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr. saw from the moon, or the platter of Plastic Thanksgiving Turkey that Bush held up in front of global TV cameras — while flashing his "winning" smile — during a surprise visit to oppressed and exploited United States soldiers in the Iraq Illegal War Zone in November 2003.

The final chapter in this secret history of world-systems is the crash of the semi-global flight from Australia to the USA as depicted in *Lost*. The opportunity that presents itself is then to try to understand as many aspects as possible — in the seminal moments of their first appearance — of the emerging worldview of world. The survivors of *Lost* have crashed into something genuinely new — the world itself in its radical otherness and ambivalence, apprehended without the lens of what Heidegger calls Western metaphysical thinking in the age of the world picture. Metaphysics is distanced from existence and cogitates the employment of knowledge in the service of "man's unfettered freedom" requiring the certainty of "an unshakable ground of truth" to establish its validity. In the



age of the world picture (twentieth-century “modern times”), the world is for us “only a picture.” Modern man institutes his relationship to the environment and to other beings through a subtle yet devastating form of domination known as representation. As the subject, he sets up beings as knowable transparent objects in front of himself or as that-which-lies-before him. The subservient represented — pictorial, calculable, quantitative or informational — status of the world as a mere instrument at our disposal is continuously enforced via man’s acts of “placing before himself”, “bringing before himself”, and “having before himself” (*vor sich stellen, vor sich bringen, vor sich haben*) of beings as objects. “Beings as a whole come to be considered in such a way that a being becomes first and only a being after it is set in place by representing-manufacturing humanity.” (Heidegger) In the worldview of world, by contrast, there is rediscovery of passionate engagement with existence in astonishment and intuition; reinvention of knowledge as endless flowing multi-layered hyper-textual writing; freeing of the individual not as a sovereign Island but rather in webbed association with and even in sweet surrender to other human beings; blossoming of feelings of love for animals, vegetables, and A-Life beings; and architecting the rootedness of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world starting from our social condition of total alienation through an aesthetics of disturbances and radical illusions.

## Blade Runner

What makes Blade Runner extraordinary is that it artfully presents an alternative to the two predominant ways in which artificially intelligent machines or androids are thought about and depicted in mainstream techno-culture. These modes recur again and again in novels, scientific pundit books, and Hollywood films. For theorist-entrepreneurs like Ray Kurzweil (*The Age of Spiritual Machines*) or movies like *A. I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001), *Bicentennial Man* (1999), or *The Matrix* (1999), there are two possible ways of imagining artificial intelligence. Either it is a question of androids attaining human-like characteristics (computational skills, memory capacity, emotions, intuitions, behaviour, and consciousness), and therefore accepting to have as their goal to become equivalent to humans. Or it is about androids exceeding human intelligence and skilfulness, and therefore becoming an ominous menace to humanity as they seek to dominate us. Never is it about humans and androids co-existing in difference or, better, otherness.

The job of Blade Runner Rick Deckard, played by Harrison Ford, is to weed out, hunt down, and retire trespassing replicants who have surreptitiously made their way



back to decaying Earth society from their slave labor assignments in the off-world colonies or on space exploration expeditions. Deckard is a technical expert at distinguishing android skin jobs made by biotech companies like the Tyrell Corp. from human beings. But the resonating message of the film of ideas *Blade Runner* is that we are all replicants.

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As the future noir hard-boiled detective called back from retirement to handle an especially difficult case gets ready to administer the Voigt-Kampff empathic response analyzer exam to the female Tyrell android Rachael, played by Sean Young, his test subject asks him, “have you ever taken that test yourself?” Deckard later asks CEO Eldon Tyrell, played by Joe Turkel, “how can it not know what it is?” in reference to Rachael, who is uninformed about her origins. But that question applies as well to the sleuth’s own reality. Rachael’s eyes glow a faint red during her V-K trial, as do those of the combat model android Leon, played by Brion James. As Deckard steps out of the bathroom in his highrise apartment, we see camera light bouncing off his slightly out of focus eyes in a similar manner.

Rick Deckard is obsessed with collecting photographs, many of which are strewn about on his piano. “I don’t know why replicants would collect photos”, he comments in the voiceover.

After the protracted showdown of doubles atop abandoned fractal city skyscrapers near the end of the film between the “overinvolved” detective and the replicant Roy Batty, played by Rutger Hauer, another of Deckard’s figurative brothers has a cryptic message for him. Lt. Gaff, played by Edward James Olmos, is the world-weary hero’s shadowy, shadowing, and competitive fellow *Blade Runner*. Gaff usually talks in a Citspeak patois, but he tells Deckard just after the movie’s pivotal scene, “You’ve done a man’s job, sir”, as if the protagonist were not really a man. “It’s too bad she won’t live”, Gaff says about Rick Deckard’s post-robotic lover Rachael. “But then again, who does?”, he obscurely adds.

The uncertainty of Deckard’s ontological status as human or replicant is brought out more forcefully in *Blade Runner: Director’s Cut* (1992), which restores an uncanny twelve-second dream sequence of a majestic silver-white unicorn running through misty woods, shown when Deckard nods off while playing the piano. Lt. Gaff, who makes origami figures, leaves the tiny tinfoil form of a unicorn on the floor just outside Deckard’s apartment in the film’s final moments. The juxtaposition of dreamland and decorative variants of the mythical equine creature delicately hints that Gaff and the police authorities know the content of Deckard’s dreams. The divorced sushi lover’s dreams and wishes





have been technologically implanted, just as he himself knows of Rachael's childhood recollection of the baby spiders outside her window, which was the technical reproduction of a memory of Tyrell's niece.



In an alternate version of Blade Runner's film script, Gaff says to Deckard less subtly, "You've done a man's job. But are you a man? It's getting hard to tell around here."

As director Ridley Scott expressed in a 1982 interview, "the central character could in fact be what he is chasing." "[The] unicorn scene", Scott has also said, "would be the strongest clue that Deckard, this hunter of replicants, might actually be an artificial human himself."

But the clues suggesting that Deckard is himself a replicant are only interesting in their provocation of the more significant question of what might the likelihood that Deckard is a replicant itself be a clue to?

The duel confrontation between Rutger Hauer's Roy Batty and Harrison Ford's Deckard marks a step beyond the dissolving of boundaries between man and machine or living and non-living characteristic of first-wave cybernetics and its subversion. The breaking down of rigid oppositions between categories of techno-scientific inquiry is made possible by the conversion of all objects of knowledge into information.

Blade Runner's climactic rooftop scene symbolizes entry into the order of simulation and seduction, or the era of second-wave cybernetics and its discontents. What is crucial is the reversibility of the characters' roles, or the impossibility of knowing who is leading or following whom in the Blade Runner-android chase. Although each new epistemic wave in the genealogy of cybernetics preserves the properties of the preceding wave, it is





the qualities of seduction and reversibility that separate android from cyborg resistance. In the second order of informatic self-reflexivity and object-orientation, technologies increasingly give rise to effects which are the opposite of those intended. The given system must pay back its debt to the otherness which it excluded in order to found itself.

Beyond the question of whether or not Deckard is literally a replicant is the fact that he comes to be endowed with a secret destiny by the androids that he did not have before becoming a Blade Runner. The “original human” starts to imitate, and to be seduced by, that which he created as an imitation of himself.

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## 2001

Gianna Maria Gatti's *Technological Herbarium* (subtitled *Vegetable Nature and New Technologies in Art Between the Second and Third Millennia*) is a seminal study of “interdisciplinary” works of art that exemplify the increasing importance of science and technology in artistic creation. Her analysis, however, goes way beyond that of a journalistic or curatorial survey of artworks. Her work embodies the invention of a strong philosophical concept that enables nothing less than the glimpsing — in the coming together of nature and new technologies in the domain of art — of a new real. The hybrid of art and technoscience is the carrier of a new worldview, a new era for cyberspace, new cognitive thought, and the emergence of authentic post-metaphysical thinking as pointed to by great twentieth-century philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gregory Bateson. It is the anthropocentric arrogance of Man vis-à-vis the environment and other living beings — leading ultimately to His suicide — that will be brought into question and actively deconstructed by this oeuvre-in-movement co-authored by technological artists and the muses secretly transmitting knowledge and inspiration to them from the elsewhere of the wounded planet Gaia finally starting to defend herself and her future. This fascinating collaboration carries out what the great epistemologist of second-order cybernetics Francisco Varela called “the co-definition between knower and known”, declaring artists to be “the proclaimers of the core knowledge of the real”. To the cooperation between artist and world is added the contribution of the user or “immersant” in the shared communicative aesthetic experience of virtual reality environments. In this context, Gatti considers the Planetary Garden exhibition of curator Gilles Clément (*Garden of Knowledge and Garden of Experiences*). Clément's 1999–2000 Parisian exposition at the Grande Halle de la Villette addressed the condition of separation between humanity and nature in their cohabitation of planet Earth,



and the possible overcoming of this estrangement. Gatti engages in a reflection of magisterial scope on non-human life-forms. What is the identity of living beings which are other than human? In pursuing this question, her two privileged objects of inquiry are the vegetable kingdom and Artificial Life. She contemplates in a single Gestalt the two extremes of the most ancient eons-old life-forms produced by Nature and the newest forms of life produced by our most advanced contemporary Technology. On the one side: trees, plants, and flowers. On the other side: the erupting vitality of informatic, virtual, and software objects-creatures. And the genesis of SOMETHING BIG that is coming into view on the horizon thanks to their close encounter. Gatti's research is a profound reflection not only on art's brush with computer technologies, but also on biology, deep ecology, the existent, the living organism, life itself. It is an Enlightened meditation on and recognition of the mutually beneficial potential relationship between the natural and the artificial. It is a cultural theory taking shape at the dawn of one of the most promising periods of European intellectual history: the supersession of what Heidegger and Derrida called the metaphysical binary oppositions that began with Plato and Aristotle, or what critical social scientists like Varela, and Buddhist and Hindu spiritual traditions, call dualistic thinking.

The breadth of Gianna Maria Gatti's *Technological Herbarium* is reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's epic film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, arguably the greatest science fiction movie ever made. The black alien monolith incites a surge in the evolution of primate consciousness from Ape to Man by suggesting to a selected group of becoming-Neanderthals the discovery of technology as tool and weapon. At the start of the third millennium, the monolith reappears on the moon, sending a mysterious radio signal towards Jupiter. The astronaut played by Keir Dullea of the spaceship *Discovery* survives the ultimate psychedelic trip through the doors of perception near and on the fifth planet of the solar system. He returns to Earth as the cosmic baby who possesses a valuable secret related to the question of the next leap of human evolution to a higher consciousness. The other major character of the film is the computer HAL9000 (voice of Douglas Rain) — the most important figure of Artificial Intelligence in our filmic cultural imagination — who can think autonomously and hold a real natural-language conversation. What is implied by Kubrick and screenplay co-author Arthur C. Clarke is the imminence of a world-historical change in what technology is for humanity, shifting from being a tool for the domination of nature and a weapon in the killing-madness of war to technology redefined as a friend of the Earth and a helper in the life-affirming organization of peace. Technology will abet us in inventing a new relationship to the otherness of other human



beings on our shared planet, and in dramatically rethinking the existence and status of non-human life-forms, be they animal, vegetable, artificial-virtual or alien.

The artworks investigated by Gatti are in dialogue with every field of scientific knowledge. The artists whose creations are brought together in her *Technological Herbarium* have confronted the theme of vegetable nature while at the same time working with new technologies and new media. In their installations, they make use of computers, electronics, video, Internet (net.art), telerobotics, telematic networks, remote telepresence, mechanical engineering, bionics, and transgenics. Hardware, software, and wetware. The virtual, the digital, and the informatic. Interactive participatory works and environments invite the user to discover her polysensoriality. The perceptual-motoric-tactile dimension of embodiment is restored to equal standing with the symbolic-rational dimension emphasized by traditional art. The artist who utilizes information technologies designs “a semi-living entity, a work which in fact is ‘open’, since its outcome is not predefined by the artist, but is rather realized through the interventions and actions of the user”. (Gianna Maria Gatti) The experience of metamorphosis of virtual reality sensitizes us to, and enhances our awareness of, the real. “The ‘virtual’ proposes to us an other experience of the ‘real’. In fact, it is the common notion of ‘reality’ that must be placed into question. Since ‘virtual’ realities are not less real than sensory experiences that we accumulate ‘naturally’. Virtual images are not visual illusions, images of pure representation. On the contrary, these ‘virtual’ realities can be visited, explored and even touched.” (Philippe Quéau)





# seadna mathews

## “joshu’s dog”

from *Zen Koans: Scenes from the Choreography of Enlightenment*

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There is a koan:

Joshu is asked “Does even a dog have Buddha nature?”

He answers “Not!”

On the face of it a strange koan. We might answer that of course a dog has Buddha nature so the answer should have been a simple yes, but we are merely polishing our ignorance. First because we don’t understand the context of the question but more importantly because we are assuming that we have some understanding of what Buddha nature might be. There are many koans which ask the question “What is Buddha nature” and many different answers. The major flaw in the question is a basic problem with language. Just because we can ask a question does not mean that the question is meaningful or that the answer is going to be comprehensible.

For instance take the following list of abstract nouns: Justice, peace, truth, honesty, virtuousness, vitality. You can combine them any way you want and get what sounds like meaningful questions. Here are three combinations of three words —

Does peace make justice virtuous?

Does justice make virtue peaceful?

Does virtue make justice peaceful?

Do the vitality of truth and the virtuousness of honesty make justice peaceful?

They sound like questions. In fact they sound like questions you could spend hours debating but there is no substance to them. They are merely combinations of abstract nouns. You can pick some nouns yourself and put them into similar sentences and if

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you're not careful you could end up a famous philosopher with great insights into the interactions of justice peace and virtue.

But, I hear you say, they ARE meaningful questions. If they are then it is solely because your mind puts meaning into the words. Abstract nouns have no referents. They don't point to anything. You can't put justice in a wheelbarrow and bring it around for everyone to look at. Make your own list of abstractions and put them in a hat and pull them out two or three at a time. Amazing insights will be yours.

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You might argue that the student above is trying to understand what Buddha nature is, by asking the question. Unfortunately that understanding lies outside the domain of words and therefore cannot be reached through words. The very first lines of the Tao make this point. Words have a domain which includes names for things that we perceive and abstractions from those. There is nothing else available to words. Using our unenlightened mind we cannot conceive of something except in terms of what we have already perceived. If you go to a dictionary to look up a word you haven't come across before, it will explain it in terms you already know and at root, everything we know comes from our senses. This includes ethical concepts such as justice which come from our feelings of how we or others have been treated. Our strong point as a species is that we can talk which means that we can co-operate and that we don't have to learn everything for ourselves. We have many weak points but one related to words is that we think that words can convey everything. Words, for example, can't be used to convey music or the taste of a glass of wine.

Words work best when the object, or phenomenon, they describe is public, or the sensation we are describing is common and simple. If you and I can look at an object together, or set of objects, and agree what to call it/them, then we have a very useful word. Most people know the word ball which refers to things that are spherical, spherical of course meaning ball-like. Unfortunately ball refers to such a large class of things that using the word on its own is not generally useful. We either need a context or a modifier. "During the golf game I hit the ball into the rough six times" or simply "golf ball". Once we have one of these we can know what it is that the speaker is referring to but only if we've seen a golf ball before or had the term explained to us with references to things we do know about. It is obvious that if I say that a golf ball is about the same size as a ping-pong ball but heavier and with dimples I will not guarantee the same ac-





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curacy of meaning as when I’ve actually seen and held one, since for example “heavier” is a relative term.

When we get out of the visual domain and into taste, for example, then the sensations we are describing are private. Even if you and I taste the same wine we are aware that we may not share the same reactions. I may be an experienced wine drinker and it might be your first taste of wine. In theory what we are tasting is the same but we would use completely different words for the experience. We can agree on the simple words: sweet like sugar or honey, sour like a lemon, salty like salt, because by tasting these things we can agree on the words for that experience. But the privacy of taste will defeat us when we move into something complex like wine or even two different varieties of apple. Are there foods that you don’t like that other people do? Or foods that you didn’t like when you were younger that you now do? The objective taste of these foods has probably not changed but your reaction and how you would describe the experience has. The inherent complication of private experience is comparing one person’s experience to another’s. Is my “bad headache” more painful than your “bad headache”?

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So the first lesson from the koan is to be wary of words that don’t refer to real world objects referenced by public experiences. Abstract words have us thinking we understand something when we may not. If the questioner understood what Buddha nature was then they wouldn’t have asked the question. The questioner is using a language pattern to frame what sounds like a question but is only a meaningless combination of words. Unfortunately the teacher set the stage so that it was a reasonable thing to do and is now lumbered with having to provide an answer.

The second lesson is that you cannot convey a concept like Buddha nature by talking about it. This is a primary problem with “teaching” zen. The Tao that can be spoken about is not the real Tao. The domain of Tao or Buddha nature does not intersect with the domain of words. If I say that Buddha nature is a dried piece of shit I’m not trying to tell you what Buddha nature is directly, I’m trying to form your mind so that you can understand Buddha nature for yourself. If you want to guide water you don’t do anything to the water itself — you change the terrain that the water runs over. Buddha nature is something that must be experienced, not a concept to be manipulated with the intellectual part of your mind. If you talk about it you’ll only find talking. You can’t look for it because if you seek it you’ll only find seeking. (In his commentary on the

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koan Mumen says that enlightenment is like a dumb person who has a dream, another private experience: He knows it but he has no way of talking about it.)

The third lesson is humility. An attentive and appreciative audience can give you the illusion that you know something and can teach. Anyone who sets themselves up as a teacher exposes themselves to the virus of a dreadful disease called guruitis. Guruitis leads you towards a false sense of being wise and knowledgeable. The feeling of flattery that comes from having people pay attention to you and compliment you on your insights leads to a belief that you are wise and insightful and you then end up forgetting your foolishness and ignorance and recycling the same recipe over and over. This is why so many of the famous Zen monks spent so long wandering from place to place with no permanent home or retired to an obscure village far away from everywhere. The master in the above koan did not start teaching until he was 80 years old.

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Imagine the situation:

You have just spoken for half an hour explaining some basics of Buddhism (“Expounding the dharma” no less). You feel pleased that you have succeeded in communicating some of the core concepts. You pause and ask “Any questions?” And then you get the above. You realise, shocked, that your ability to explain, to transmit, is a lot less than you imagined and you are also faced with the workings of an ignorant mind. However you have to answer the question.

You know it’s a trick question of course. To understand why, we first need to express it in terms which are more relevant to our (Western) current culture. A dog in the questioner’s culture is not the animal we think of today. For us a dog has overtones of a faithful pet, something affectionate, a companion or a working animal. To the questioner it is a cowardly and vicious beast that lurks on the periphery of human habitation snatching what it can for food.

It might be better to ask:

Does a diseased, shit-eating, plague carrying, sewer rat have Buddha nature?

Who would ask such a question? Is it simply some soul trying to lessen the void of their ignorance or someone who is trying to force you to admit that something disgusting has Buddha nature and therefore, by rhetorical implication, Buddha nature is disgusting?





“JOSHU’S DOG”

If you say yes, a dog has Buddha nature then your audience will go “Yuk!” and you will have lost them. If you say no then you will not be telling the truth.

Before we get to the answer let us think a bit more about the implications of answering yes. Sewer rats have Buddha nature. Great. I don’t meet sewer rats although I do know of their existence. So I don’t really have to consider this in anything but the abstract. So I’m cool with the answer. However what about the “evil” figures in history. Hitler had Buddha nature. So does the last psychopathic killer you read about. Worse, so does your enemy. And the drunk in the gutter. And that rude waiter. And all those starving people you see on TV. In an absolute sense all these people are your equal. This was what the questioner was objecting to — Are you saying that I am equal to a sewer rat?

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So caught between two equally unpleasant alternatives our expounder simply says “Not!” It’s a great answer. It says that the question is not meaningful (“does not compute”) and also that the questioner is not asking because they want an answer. Both are sadly true of most questions.







# georg ivanovas medical perception and the blind spot

## The Theory of Observation and the Blind Spot

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We all have the natural feeling to perceive an outer objective world. But, as we know, nothing can be more wrong than that. The fact that things are not the way we believe them to be has been a major topic in different sciences. Especially in physics there exists a clear concept in how the process of observing influences the outcome. For medicine a comparable theory of perception has never been formulated. There still prevails a kind of naive naturalism maintaining that health, disease and therapeutic interventions can be judged objectively. In this article I will review some facts contradicting this position. Two points, not necessarily always addressed, will be central. First, that perception is theory driven from the very beginning, and second, that there is always an unobserved field, an unrealized blind spot.

The fact that even the basic issues of perception depend on theories shall be demonstrated with three, somehow deliberate examples:

To interpret complex and ambiguous input, the human visual system uses certain assumptions about the world. For example, it is assumed that light comes from above. This assumption is constantly adapted by interactive experience with the environment. (Adams et al., 2004)

Geometric illusions are perceived by a kind of probabilistic guess according to the individual experience. (Howe and Purves, 2005)

After Sacks had lost the inner representation of his leg (see below) he had the illusion of falling when he stood on his two legs. Although standing upright, he perceived how he fell, obviously because in his inner theory only one leg existed. (Sacks, 1984: 140)

The necessity to organise incoming data according to theories in order to achieve a stable perception has been proved by Gestalt psychology decades ago. Experiments and experience have shown that social cognition works quite the same. However, we rarely experience that our perception is a theory and does not represent an objective world. This might happen when we are fooled by optical illusions or by the tricks of a magician.



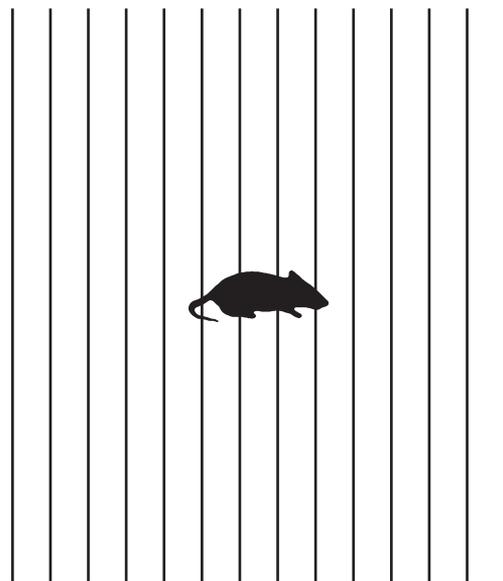


In social relations the incongruence between our theories and observations is sometimes felt in disappointing situations when persons turn out to be quite different than we experienced them to be. More often this phenomenon is seen in intercultural relations where others do not behave at all “how they should”.

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Comparable situations in science occur when an observation cannot be explained by the traditional theories. Such irregularities are an indication that the used scientific approach (the paradigm) is not appropriate for describing the observed process. (Kuhn, 1970) The mostly used strategy to tackle such irregularities is to ignore them. This is supported by their labelling with so-called explanatory principles. Explanatory principles are words or expressions which seem to explain a whole range of phenomena but cannot be explained themselves. (Bateson, 1972: 38–58) That is, such words do not explain anything. They just remove the labelled phenomena from the frame of observation. In medicine, labelling with words like “psychological” or “placebo effect” is quite common. Unexpected developments become thus somehow explained, although nothing is gained.

Actually, a large unperceived area is produced following the same principles as the blind spot in neurophysiology. When you close your left eye and concentrate on the cross at a distance of about 20–30 cm the mouse vanishes. Only lines are left.



FRAMEMAKERS



The explanation of the blind spot by the lack of receptors in the area of the visual nerve does explain why we do not see the mouse. It cannot, however, explain why we always see a whole picture. There are no gaps in our visual field. Foerster said: “We do not see that we do not see.” (Foerster and Bröcker, 2002)

This necessity to create an integral perception is particularly prominent in persons with an enlarged blind spot through stroke or tumours. For example, such a patient saw only half of the food on her plate and could, consequently, only eat this half, complaining that she was served too little. When the plate was turned she saw the food again, and again she could eat half of it. (Sacks, 1998: 77–79)

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The same principles of perception prevail in science where a given epistemology creates a more or less large blind spot. But most scientists have the feeling of a complete system.

### The Theoretical and the Phenomenological Approach

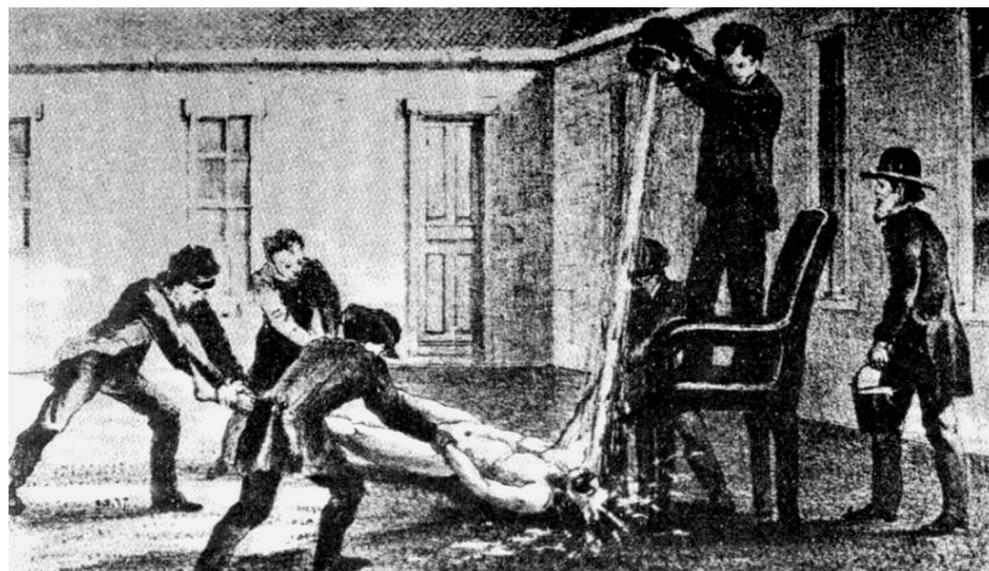
With two accounts about people with “psychological” problems these principles shall be translated into medical practice. The first text is by Alice Miller, a known psychoanalyst.

*A patient from an African family grew up alone with his mother after his father had died while he was still a very small boy. His mother insists on certain conventions and does not allow the child to be aware of his narcissistic and libidinal needs in any way, let alone express them. On the other hand, she regularly massages his penis until puberty, ostensibly on medical advice. As an adult her son leaves his mother and her world and marries an attractive European with quite a different background. Is it due to chance or to his unerring instinct that this woman not only torments and humiliates him but also undermines his confidence to an extreme degree, and that he is quite unable to stand up to her or leave her? This sado-masochistic marriage, like the other example, represents an attempt to break away from the parents' social system with the help of another one. The patient was certainly able to free himself from the mother of his adolescence, but he remained emotionally tied to the Oedipal and pre-Oedipal mother whose role was taken over by his wife as long as he was not able to experience the feelings from that period. In his analysis he encountered his original ambivalence. It was terribly painful for him to realize the extent to which he had needed his mother as a child and at the same time had felt abused in his helplessness; how much he had loved her, hated her, and been entirely at her mercy. The patient experienced these feelings after*

*four years of analysis, with the result that he no longer needed his wife's perversions and could separate from her. At the same time he was able to see her far more realistically, including her positive sides.*

Miller, 1990: 61

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Psychiatric therapy in the 19th century.

The other example is an account by Hahnemann. He treated a psychotic patient in 1792 (published 1796), at a time when mentally ill people were still held in chains, tortured and shown to the public. It was two years before Pinel in the Salpêtrière released the psychiatric patients from their chains, marking the beginning of a different psychiatric care which took another hundred years to be more generally accepted. (Kraepelin, 1962)

*We will only give selections from the most striking parts relating to mental science, especially such as give the reader an idea of the gifted and comprehensive mind now distorted by the violence of the disease, but which, disordered as it was, yet aroused admiration. Hahnemann devoted the first weeks to observation only, without giving any medical treatment to his patient. The latter spent day and night having a series of attacks; at one minute he spoke as a judge and delivered sentence; at another, he would recite as Agamemnon, or as Hector*

*in the actual words of the Iliad, sung in the middle of a stanza of Pergolese's Stabat Mater; or he quoted passages from the Old Testament in the original Hebrew, or sought for an old Greek melody to a song of Anacreon or the Anthology; and again changed over to passages from Milton's "Paradise Lost" or Dante's "Inferno"; and from these again he would turn to algebraic formulae. Nothing was ever quite completed, but the new idea displaced the former with violent haste. "The marvellous part", says Dr. Hahnemann, "was the correctness of expression of all that his memory recalled from writings in many languages, especially of all that he had acquired in his youth." This mixture bears testimony to his extraordinary and manifold knowledge, but perhaps also to his eager desire to be brought into prominence by it, as he did when he boasted of his intimate acquaintance with distinguished personages; he was not free from this characteristic in his normal state. He smashed everything that came to hand at that period, even his piano, and this he put together again in a peculiar manner in order, as he said, to find a complementary note, the Proslambanomenon. This man, who ordinarily knew nothing of bodily ailments, once wrote out for himself a prescription to be immediately dispensed, the rare ingredients of which, according to Hahnemann's deposition, were so well chosen and arranged, and so correctly calculated for the treatment of a maniac of his type, that it could easily have been accepted as the work of a learned physician; had it not been that the absurd signature and directions for administering it were proof of a disordered mind. By what means did the spirit in the midst of the fog of a storm-tossed imagination, without chart or rudder, find its way to so excellent a remedy for insanity, and one unknown to many a doctor, seeing that he had no books in his possession? How did he manage to prescribe it for himself in the most appropriate form and dose? Almost as astonishing was the fact that during the worst period of his mental disorder, on being questioned, he would not only know the date (this perhaps was comprehensible, although he had no calendar) but also the correct hour by day or night with great exactitude. As he began to improve, this power of divination became more uncertain and unreliable until with the complete return of his reason he knew neither more nor less about it than an ordinary person. When he was completely cured, I pressed him once in a friendly way to solve this riddle for me, or at least to describe the sensation that had prompted him. "My whole body shudders", he replied, "and something cold runs over me when I try to think of it; I pray you not to remind me of this thing . . ." At the beginning of his recovery he had a ravenous appetite (ten pounds of bread a day besides other food did not satisfy him); at the same time he showed a tendency to deceive and offend everybody, and yet when well again he ate moderately and behaved courteously to everyone — these are symptoms previously observed in similar patients.*

Haehl 2, 1991: 34

Miller's account provides only those observations in line with her theories. Every statement makes sense to those acquainted with psychoanalysis. But we learn more about Miller's theories than about the patient. Hahnemann's account, in contrast, is full of unexplained and unexplainable observations. One might even ask why he describes all this.

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This illustrates a central dichotomy in observation: Descriptions and observations which refer to causes are more theory orientated than when they refer to effects and a description is less phenomenological the more theoretical it is. (Hanson, 1972: 60–62) That is, a causal description is necessarily poorer and less complete than a phenomenological description. This creates problems as already stated by Bernard, one of the main founders of scientific medicine. He said: "An experimenter, who clings to his preconceived idea and notes the results of his experiment only from this point of view, falls inevitably into error, because he fails to note what he has not foreseen and so makes a partial observation." (Bernard: 23) And he concluded: "Men who have excessive faith in their theories or ideas are not only ill prepared for making discoveries; they also make poor observations." (Bernard: 38)

This dichotomy is not a consequence of today's scientific thinking but inherent in all medical practice. Already Celsus' distinction between a theoretical and empirical medicine, written in the 1st century, described this inherent tension which in modern terms is called the opposite of generalization and individualization. (Celsus: 7–27)

Hahnemann was a representative of the then evolving *romantic medicine* which believed in the individual value of man, therefore he was interested in the individual person with all its subtleties. As individual values were no issue for medical thinking before and later, detailed and individual descriptions of psychotic processes have never been of special concern in medical literature. It was more a subject for artists. In today's medicine, where diagnosis and therapy are mainly based on statistics, individuality is rather regarded as a nuisance.

This lack of interest in the individual impressed me already at university. When we were first presented a psychotic patient hearing voices, we wanted to know more about these voices, what they said, what they meant in the context of the patient, and so on. But all discussion was interrupted. It was sufficient for the diagnosis and the therapy that he heard voices. Everything else was mysticism. This is how poor observers are educated.

Maybe the best account of a psychotic state is the autobiography of John Perceval who described the development, the crisis and the recovery of his psychosis in 1830–



1832 giving precious insights into the disease. (Bateson, 1974) For example, he stressed that the usual behaviour of his environment maintained and increased his symptoms and that finally a good and supporting treatment helped him to recover.<sup>1)</sup>

### Perception Creates Reality

The first consequence of a poor observation is that too many things are ignored such that a diagnosis or an opinion when once established is not changed even if wrong. Known is the experiment by Rosenhan and co-workers. They asked to be voluntarily admitted into psychiatric care claiming to hear voices and asking for help. Once hospitalised they behaved totally normally, or as normally as they could. The duration of their “treatment” ranged between seven and 52 days. No one was unmasked as a fake patient by the staff (although other patients realized). What ever they did was seen as confirming the diagnosis. (Rosenhan) This was, unfortunately, not a singular case. A German girl was diagnosed to be hebephrenic by a psychologist at the age of 14. She was put into psychiatry where she showed resistance. She was treated with different drugs and entered a cycle of resistance and ever more drugs. Sometimes she was so drugged that she could hardly move or swallow, which reaffirmed the diagnosis. After more than 30 years the European Court of Justice released her as it found that the first diagnosis was not properly made and the further diagnoses were just a continuation of the first one. Actually the girl/women never had been ill, but showed normal reactions to drugs and a normal resistance to unfair imprisonment. (Ehlers, 2005) That is, in this case a given diagnosis connected with certain theories and a style of observation produced the symptoms which confirmed the diagnosis. This recursive process is the core of an attitude which has been called asylum mentality in psychiatry. (Foucault, 1965)

It is certain also that physicians in the 17th century saw mainly positive effects of bleeding, enema and the artificially administered abscesses or burns used to “draw off the disease” according to the then prevailing paradigm. Hahnemann, as an excellent observer, noticed, however, that this practice did more harm than good. His rift with the medical community came when he accused the private physician of emperor Leopold II of killing his patient by too many bleedings. He wrote:

*The bulletins (of Leopold's physician) state: “On the morning of February 28, his doctor, Lagusius, found a severe fever and a distended abdomen” — he tried to fight the condition by venesection, and as this failed to give relief, he repeated the process three times more, without*





*any better result. We ask, from a scientific point of view, according to what principles has anyone the right to order a second venesection when the first has failed to bring relief? As for a third, Heaven help us!; but to draw blood a fourth time when the three previous attempts failed to alleviate! To abstract the fluid of life four times in twenty-four hours from a man, who has lost flesh from mental overwork combined with a long continued diarrhoea, without procuring any relief for him! Science pales before this!*

Haehl 1, 1991: 35

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Bleeding has negative effects. This was Hahnemann's observation challenging the paradigm of the time. So far, this is nothing special, as there were always physicians who understood quite early that certain practices are not for the benefit of patients. In the frame of a study of medical perception this episode becomes interesting when it is compared with a statement of Magendi, who was not only one of the most famous doctors of his time, but is considered today as the founder of modern physiology and pharmacology. Magendi, about 40 years after Hahnemann's fiery accusation, made fun of his colleagues who bled in pneumonia on the side of the inflammation. Since Harvey (i.e. for 200 years) they should have known that both sides are connected, so bleeding is possible at both sides. (Lichtenthaeler, 1975: 447)

This example demonstrates that scientific knowledge does not enable one to perceive harmful developments and therapies. Venesection was finally abandoned in a quite modern way. Bernard proved statistically in comparative studies that there is no beneficial effect of bleeding in pneumonia. (Bernard, 1957: 195)

### **The Blind Spot of Statistics**

The statistical method became central in current medicine where it is called *evidence based medicine*. It has proved the effectiveness of many therapies and the ineffectiveness or harm of many others like bleeding, preventive mammography, hormone replacement therapy in menopausal women or cortisone after head injury.

But also evidence based medicine has a large blind spot: For hormone replacement therapy in menopausal women there have been hundreds of statistics showing that this therapy is effective and safe.

A year before the *New England Journal of Medicine* published the WHI-study demonstrating that this therapy did more harm than good the same journal published a positive study of which the related editorial said: "Good news about oral contraceptives:



The development of oral contraceptives stands as a major advance in women's health in the past century." (*New England Journal of Medicine* editorial, 2002) This discrepancy points to a central problem of statistical medicine: Only large studies involving hundreds of persons with a duration of several years provide statistically reliable results. But such studies exist only for a few treatments. But even if reliable results exist there is no certainty that these results can be applied to a certain person. The question remains whether findings true for a vegetarian English woman doing sports are still true for an obese smoking Hungarian man. This blind spot has been formulated as follows: "Large numbers show a statistically exact result. But nobody knows for whom it is the case. Small numbers show a statistically unsuitable result, but we know whom it concerns. Difficult to say which kind of ignorance is more useless." (Beck-Bornholdt and Dubben, 2003: 218, my trans.)

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This contradiction between generalisation and individualisation is a central problem of medicine. What is true for the individual might not be true for the population and vice versa.

### Observation and Action

Oliver Sacks, an American neurologist, became famous for his accounts of neurological cases which challenge the linear thinking of our current medical paradigm. His first account was his own case, where, after the immobilization of a fracture of his leg, he developed pseudoparesis without neural lesion. It is impossible to define what he exactly had, as there is no neurophysiological tool to do so. Sacks described it as a somatic scotome, as a disturbance of the plan of the body. The immobilized leg was eliminated from the inner representation.

It was an unbelievable situation for him and for all of the consulted doctors. However, Sacks' later investigations showed that this phenomenon was quite common. It was known by patients as they suffer from it. But it was overseen by doctors as they had (and have) no theory to describe it. (Sacks, 1984)

In a later book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (Sacks, 1998) Sacks gives a collection of cases which demonstrate that our current understanding of the function of the brain is deficient, or better: wrong. He describes how certain abilities arise in patients with brain disease or brain injury, abilities that are known only from patients with outstanding talents. He called these abilities *excesses*. Sacks shows that these cases can only be approached when all linear assumptions are left behind.

*“Deficit” . . . is neurology’s favourite word — its only word, indeed, for any disturbance of function. Either the function (like a capacitor or fuse) is normal — or it is defective or faulty: what other possibility is there for a mechanistic neurology, which is essentially a system of capacities and connections? What then of the opposite — an excess or superabundance of function? Neurology has no word for this — because it has no concept. A function, or a functional system, works — or it does not: these are the only possibilities it allows. Thus a disease which is “ebullient” or “productive” in character challenges the basic mechanistic concepts of neurology, and this is doubtless one reason why such disorders — common, important, and intriguing as they are — have never received the attention they deserve.*

Sacks, 1998: 87

An example of such “excesses” are hypermnesia or hypergnosia or Klockenbrink’s exact feeling of time as described by Hahnemann. Such phenomena cannot be modelled by orthodox medicine. Therefore they are normally ignored.

The most incredible case of such an observation concerns Syphilis and is, again, by Hahnemann. It would be unbelievable, if he were not such an excellent observer in all other cases. Current textbooks describe the development of Syphilis as follows: At the place of contact, mostly the genitals, the germ *Treponema pallidum* produces an initial lesion, the so called chancre, accompanied by a swelling of the regional lymph nodes. This represents the first line of defence. The chancre “heals” within several weeks spontaneously. Still during its presence or even months later a general eruption occurs, the so-called secondary stage with a dissemination of the germ all over the body. Also this secondary rash vanishes spontaneously and the disease remains again silent for years. About a third of the patients will suffer from the late Syphilis (Syphilis III) characterized by tissue destruction of all kind of organs (skin, lungs, heart, aorta, brain, etc.).

Now, Hahnemann maintains that during his more than 50 years of practice he never saw Syphilis stadium II or III if the initial lesion, the chancre, remains untouched. The chancre, if not treated, might persist even for years. (Hahnemann, 1835: 15)

As this observation is against all medical knowledge, the question arises whether it really might be possible that all medical textbooks are wrong. Will every physician or the patient himself treat the initial lesion? Yes, it is possible. Whoever saw a picture of the chancre will understand that every patient wants to get rid of the primary lesion. But as a consequence (s)he will intervene into the balance of the immune defence.

This example points to a more general problem: We have nearly no idea of how processes develop without intervention. Everything is treated with drugs, creams, surgery or

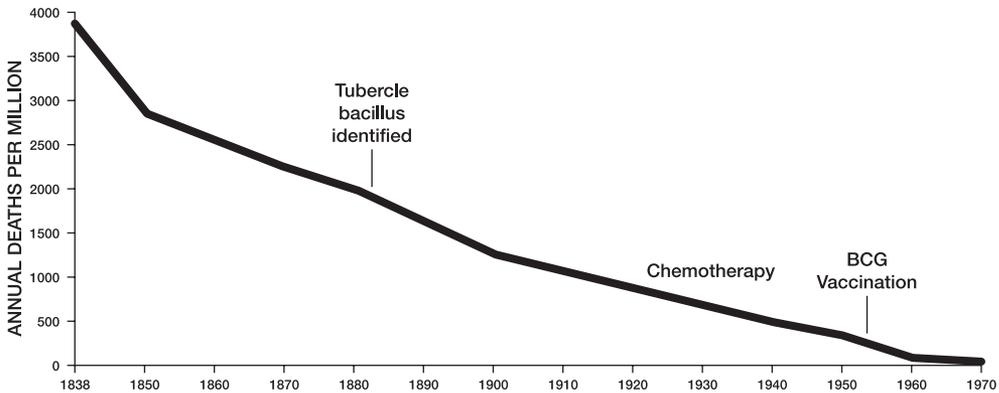
whatever. Rarely a disease is left to its real natural course. But although many treatments are superfluous, in the normal case the physician has to act. But in acting he changes the course of events. He will never encounter the same situation again. This makes medicine the most non-trivial of all sciences. A physicist might smash a nucleus again and again. A chemist might repeat his reactions as often as he wishes.

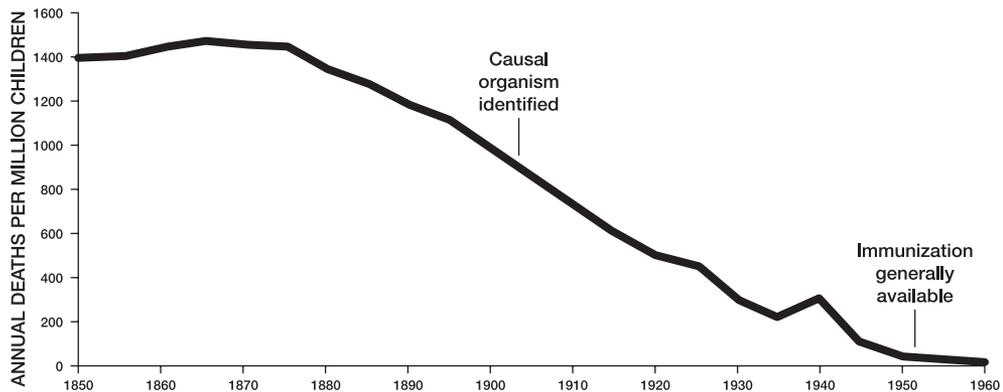
A physician lives in a totally recursive world without a stable frame of observation. Even when doing nothing — the preferable therapy of Bleuler which he called in Latin *udenotherapy* (Bleuler, 1962) — this will induce a change in the patient according to the personality of the physician. Just as it is impossible not to communicate (Watzlawick et al.: 51) it is impossible for a physician not to act. Also a physician in the hospital not seeing the patient communicates in not seeing him, which might have a tremendous impact.

### The Limits of Knowledge

How could it be possible that such an effective medicine as ours should have such a large blind spot? The answer is simple: Current medicine is not nearly as successful as assumed. Today's longevity is mainly due to the reduction of infectious diseases. (Fintch/Crimmins, 2004)

This reduction has been a steady decline since the middle of the 18th century and was uninfluenced by the introduction of antibiotics and vaccinations as exemplified with the case of scarlet fever. (Hiatt, 1975: 42) Below: figures for Tuberculosis and Whooping Cough. (McKeown, 1976)





It is difficult or impossible to assess what caused this change. But one thing is for sure: modern medicine was not (overview in Illich, 1999). But as the decline was so impressive, especially in the sixties the WHO believed that all disease might be defeated by the end of the millennium. Notorious became the statement of the U. S. Surgeon General in 1967: “The war against infectious disease has been won.” (Morens et al., 2004) But as we all know this belongs to the outstanding mistakes in scientific thinking, comparable to the resignation of the chief of the American patent office around 1880 with the explanation that all major inventions had been made.

But we are far from an ideal situation, although our perception often suggests this. An investigation of traumatized soldiers of the battles of Waterloo and Trafalgar revealed that “despite the non-existence of antiseptics, antibiotics, blood transfusions, life-support machines and other paraphernalia of modern intensive care, most of these soldiers recovered, often from life-threatening injuries. Yet with all our technical advances in medicine, mortality rates from conditions such as serious infection have not improved dramatically over the past 50 years”. (Singer, 2004)

These examples demonstrate that our medical perception is far from being complete and that the current medical paradigm, as every paradigm before, reveals only certain traits, is only a partial map to a necessarily unknown territory. Understanding the conditional nature of medical observation, a lot new could be discovered.

REFERENCES

1) Hahnemann used similar techniques to those proposed by Perceval and some are even in line with modern concepts of systemic psychotherapy.





# noeleen hartigan

## can human rights end poverty

Why are people poor? Why in a sophisticated world where I can text my friend in Australia and get an instant response have we not eradicated malaria or HIV? Why in Ireland do we have thousands of people living in hostels and children going to school hungry when we are known throughout the world for our high tech high skill problem solving population?

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One school of thought is that economic development plus a healthy amount of charitable giving should be sufficient to sort out these types of problems. Ireland is the living testament to the failure of this model. We are the second richest economy in the world, with high levels of personal charitable giving and voluntary activity. Yet our poverty levels are comparable only with the U. S. and the U. K. among developed nations.

Most people engaged in the area of tackling poverty work from the premise that what is traditionally meant by “charity”, i.e. one person giving and another passively receiving simply reinforces the power imbalance that underpins poverty. Non Governmental Organisations working in developing countries have long accepted that those in receipt of aid need to be active participants in deciding how best that aid is used. Domestic organisations are also beginning to shift in this direction. (There is an interesting irony in the fact that the model is being learnt from our experiences overseas rather than the other way around.) This emerging framework for “charity” has the potential to get to the heart of why poverty continues to exist. I believe it is because at some fundamental level we need to believe that people who are poor are simply different from us.

Anyone who reads the *Irish Times* knows the statistics about the impact of poverty from an early age on everything from educational attainment and likelihood of incarceration to actual life expectancy. On the other side of the coin we have all also heard the analysis that anyone who is unemployed or homeless in this economy is either lazy, stupid or for some perverse reason “chooses” to be in that situation. We might reject this as neo conservative waffle, but somewhere lurking deep down in ourselves is a sense that while people who are poor certainly didn't bring it on themselves, they are still fundamentally different to us.

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





Why do we do this? Perhaps it is self-preservation. Sometimes poverty is so disturbing and so in our face that we have to keep it out of our emotional sightline. If every time you passed someone begging on the street in Dublin you actually thought about them as a person, having scraped away any assumptions you had about how they got there, you might start to lose your reason.

Regardless of the reason, because we don't see people who are destitute as the same as us, we don't assume that what they need and have a right to should match our own expectations. We are encouraged to think about crisis solutions, like shelter, but not the ones which would require us to give up a bit our own hard won housing to allow that person to live in our neighbourhood.

Poverty and our perceptions of people who are poor dehumanise people. Extreme forms of poverty like homelessness deny people the most basic of things like bodily integrity and safety and practical things like housing and choice about what and when you eat and what you get to wear. Extreme poverty also denies people more ethereal things which are just as central to being a full human being as the "basics", things like singing, painting, expressing your inner creativity.

The concept of human dignity, from literally being able to protect your own body right through to sharing the thoughts of your heart and being listened to, which poverty so effectively destroys, was set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights almost 60 years ago.

After the horrors of World War Two, the governments of the world and civil society began to realise that individual people needed protection as human beings. People had been tortured, starved and massacred by their own state, and a system was needed that clearly enunciated a global understanding of human rights and dignity which was above and beyond the Government of any one country. The 30 rights which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights give equal credence to one's right not to be denied water, food or housing as ones right to vote or engage in peaceful protest.

However, by the time the Declaration was turned into legally binding covenants the new real politic was beginning to bite and two Covenants were agreed — the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The USA was strongly in favour of the former, and to this day hasn't ratified the latter, while the Soviet block countries were strongly in favour of economic, social and cultural rights (like the right to work and the right to housing and health), but less keen to accept the right to vote or freedom of expression. The split between the West and East on the relative value of either "set" of rights continued right up



until the end of the Cold War. Since the late 1980s economic, social and cultural rights have moved back up the agenda of civil society organisations and, as a result, Governments in the “west”. In 1993, the majority of the Governments in the world, including Ireland’s, ratified the Vienna Declaration proclaiming that all rights were indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. In other words, the right to housing is not only equal to the right to vote but that they are contingent on each other and equally applicable to all people, regardless of their circumstances.

The Irish Government ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1989. It commits all states that ratify it to promote, protect and fulfil such rights as the right to decent housing, the right to the highest attainable standards of health. However, we have what is known as a “dualist” legal system, which means, in effect, that if the Government sign up to a piece of international law on our behalf, it does not automatically become a part of our domestic legislation. Further specific legislation has to be proposed and passed by the Oireachtas for that law to be made real. Since 1989 no Irish government has taken the pledge we made on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights seriously enough to put it into Irish legislation.

We actually have a very rights-driven culture in Ireland. There is a state sponsored campaign called “Know your rights and you won’t go wrong”. It’s for shoppers. Government have no difficulty ensuring that those of us with money to purchase goods will be protected if the things we buy are faulty. We also have watertight property rights. In fact, the right to property is so firmly entrenched in the Irish Constitution that it has facilitated the massive land banking and soaring profits made by the select few who own huge tracts of our country. But on issues such as housing or health, successive Government have been far from keen to promote a “rights culture” or indeed to meet the obligations they have signed up to under international law.

Without the fundamental rights to housing and health enshrined in the Constitution or in law, it is left to the “charitable” sector to meet those needs.

Many charities have a campaigning agenda of promoting social and economic rights. While they may be lobbying Government for those rights in a distant policy context, they themselves may be at risk of breaching those rights every day in the way they deliver their services. This takes us right back to the idea that people who are poor are different from us, and therefore it is ok to offer them something less than we ourselves would demand. We have made huge strides in homelessness in Ireland, and are commended throughout Europe for the progress made. Yet I still wouldn’t want to spend a night in most of the hostels that are available. Domestic charities are rising to the challenge not only of the



relative quality of the services they provide, but also the manner in which those services are provided. Previous charitable models at the best merely disempowered the people through the way they work with them, at worst the model of “care” denied people their rights to bodily integrity, free speech and participation.

Domestic charities are beginning to adopt the human rights framework as a new set of values to underpin how they do their work. This goes beyond saying that we believe that all people are equal and have basic rights, which should be upheld. It is about proving that human rights can be promoted and protected *while* poverty is being tackled.

It has been said that the concept of rights is one that is always in praxis. Engaging in the rights debate also allows charities and the concept of charity itself to be in praxis, shifting the paradigm of what is meant by charity. Rights offer charities a way of “re-viewing” their work. This new view is based on the simple principle that we really are all the same, and that in providing services to people, the rights and dignity of both the “worker” and the person receiving the service are the starting point of the relationship and the basis for how all interactions proceed.

Viewing charity through the lens of rights is a powerful antidote to the problem of the “other”. Taken to its logical extreme it empowers people to be their own advocates, to literally be their own people, to re enter society and claim what is rightfully theirs along with the rest of “us”. This is really a process of re humanisation, not dissimilar from the massive shifts in perception that ended slavery or gave women the vote. We need a shift that fundamental if we are to end the abuse of human rights that is extreme poverty in Ireland.





# lawren bale ours is the living

We were not here to know  
the assuredness of infinity  
nor to predict and record  
the fall of this house of cards

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and isn't every millisecond  
the whole of abstract distinction  
of genesis, revelation, and apocalypse  
of mind?  
and what does Andromeda  
or for that matter Venus  
know  
of space and time?

What sphere outside of life  
knows,  
and are we, all of the living  
the world soul  
are we not predisposed  
to ferret out and re-cognize  
amidst the random chaos  
order and redundancy?

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# michael klien, steve valk

## social dreaming

## social choreography

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*The dancer (the fragile self) points us in the direction of what the will is capable of learning.*  
Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, p. 61

STEVE VALK:

### A Statement

When we look at our present situation as a species, it is clear that the seething surface of our revolving planet is the dance that now most urgently concerns us. The effects our human actions are having on the interweaving patterns of that dance are of the most vital importance. We are faced with learning to overcome what Einstein referred to as “the optical delusion of our consciousness”, whereby we experience ourselves “as something separate from the rest”, disconnected from nature and the primacy of our own bodily experience.

*For the human psyche is one of the great forces of nature, and what is most frightening about this space-time technology is that it exposes us to this force within us as nothing else has. We are standing in the storm of our own being. We are standing in a world not created by God, except indirectly, but by our psyches. It is undeniably our fate, so we must face the fact . . . that it may be . . . our natural habitat.*

J. Hillman and M. Ventura, *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World is Getting Worse*, p. 180

### Steps to an Ecology of Mind

*Our problem is, what is the “grammar” of reality, and what grammar are biological objects like us to create so that the reality may approximate it?*

W. Bion, *Brazilian Lectures*

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Choreography has been adapted and introduced into the fabric of social reality as a kind of temporal and spatial form of thought, a perceptual framing device or self-actuating template for an ecologically reconfigured experiment in contemporary subjectivity. The cognitive scientist Francisco Varela has said, “The blind spot of contemporary science is experience.” (Senge et al., 2005: 186) Social Choreography has opened an arena of cultural interplay between artists and audience, a lived and interconnected world of relationships, patterns and dynamics, a region of new and subtle observational capacities in which a deeper level of interdependence, an implicate order of mind and nature, has emerged as a model for a new and regenerative social reality.

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### The Social Choreographic Act

*Negri always speaks of the great creativity of the multitudes (multitude is the new name for the masses, let us admit to this), but where have we seen this creativity? It is not because you're protesting at Genoa that there is a creativity of the multitude. I have seen hundreds of these types of protests over the years and can honestly say that there isn't an ounce of creativity in all of this. Hence, the problem of creativity at this stage is a problem of knowing what creates political heterogeneity. But to create a political heterogeneity supposes very complicated and very novel principles of rupture. I am not saying that all this is easy, on the contrary. But at least we have this idea: we have this experimental idea of seeing how, on a certain number of issues, in a certain number of spaces, we can finally create political heterogeneity.*

Interview with Alain Badiou, *After the Event: Rationality and the Politics of Invention*, p. 180

MICHAEL KLIEN: Is Social Choreography, “playing for real” with the social structures, applying aesthetic sensibilities and creating a space for subjective awareness in the shaping and organization of society, etc. coupled to a sense of “utopian impulse”, or might it simply be aimed at deconstructing existing boundaries and existing ways of doing things?

STEVE VALK: I like the words “culture” and “cultivation”. To cultivate, one could say, is to disturb or rupture the soil, but this is not a purely destructive act. Cultivation means bringing air into the soil, turning things over, for new surfaces to emerge, for moisture to penetrate. The choreographic act is one of cultivation — as the shifting and changing and digging over of a situation in the social realm which allows for a new awareness to





enter into a specific situation. It is participatory, creating conditions for things to happen . . .

MICHAEL KLIEN: Of course this development and these concepts are not entirely new.

STEVE VALK: One can go back to the Situationists . . . who wanted to abolish the notion of art as a separate, specialized activity. They saw the social realm as a realm of creativity, a utopian topography which harboured vital and socially transformative possibilities. Joseph Beuys is another figure of historical importance although, I don't feel I know enough about his work. It is interesting nonetheless, that in the 22 years I have lived and worked in the arts in Germany, Beuys has rarely ever been mentioned, even though so much of the work I was involved in, in places like Ballett Frankfurt, was conceptually close and begging for comparison. I mean, without a political mandate, we transformed a traditional state theatre structure into a new kind of creative civic interface whose flexible interior design was done entirely in matted felt, Beuys' "favourite" material. Thousands of people came in, performed, participated, etc. No one mentioned Beuys or his ideas. I find that quite astounding.

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*I think the real difficulty is that some readers just do not believe that I mean what I say. I suspect that they think it is all a sort of entertainment and hope to come out at the end feeling refreshed.*

Gregory Bateson, *About Bateson*, p. 11

If you mention Beuys in Germany today the response is, "great sculptor and visual artist, excellent, timeless work, fantastic". If you remind them that he co-founded the Green Party, the Free International University and that he spent thousands and thousands of hours talking with people and lecturing, what you get is stammering, sheepish looks and silence. In the same way as Bateson, I think Beuys' thought is still indigestible today. People in the arts and in society as a whole have been actively trying to forget that Beuys actually meant what he said.

### **New Meaningful Public Space: A Manifesto**

*We are all in the bowels of this giant machine, the modern global economy, being used as instruments to serve its ends. We have created this machine collectively, but we feel trapped*





*individually. We've shifted the burden so much to the machine that we don't see a lot of options even though they may be really there. We can't go into the woods and live happily off the land anymore. So we "deep freeze" our ability to sense what is actually going on. We deny the larger consequences of what we are doing.*

P. Senge, O. Scharmer, B. S. Flowers and J. Jaworski, *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society*, p. 282

Conditions for large-scale transformative innovation in the arts, culture and society are desperate, bordering on hopeless. This is not due to lack of potential funding, talented individuals, institutional resources, project ideas, or of a genuinely concerned and engaged citizenry. What is lacking is an awareness, an expanded sensibility, which could inform, coordinate and bring about the conditions necessary to draw together and actualize capacities for profound, transformative innovation. This sensibility would need a locus, a point of orientation, a place where new domains of meaning can be cultivated.

*an already existing,  
yet still-to-be-created design,  
that you and I are somehow part of*

### **Performing Culture With the Mind of Wisdom**

In the current state of deep insecurity and uncertainty, it is essential for us as individuals and organizations to have a place to question our deepest assumptions — assumptions shared by virtually all modern societies — assumptions that are now so taken for granted that it is almost impossible for any of us to realize their impact. What is missing is a place and an infrastructure for motivated citizens and institutions to engage with each other, to immerse themselves collectively in the realities of the contemporary situation.

### **The Time to House Ourselves . . . Is Now!!!**

An infrastructure must be created which would provide opportunities and incentives for city-dwellers and local institutions to suspend their habitual ways of seeing, to talk openly about complex problems, to take stock of their situations, to exchange ideas and find common ground. An interactive field in which to cultivate a new sense of civic consciousness, one that is more fluid and in dialogue with itself, where citizens can





detach from their everyday functions and roles and cultivate a wider, panoramic, sense of knowing.

### **A Growing Sense of Urgency**

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Complex, interdependent issues are increasingly shaping the context for strategic thinking in our world. Yet the pressures created by these very phenomena tend to keep everyone in a continual “doing” mode, with little or no time for reflection and real thinking. The number of people who believe there are profound flaws in the current process of globalization is growing, yet the environment of trust needed to think about these problems is fragile. Only when people begin to see from within the forces that shape their reality and to see their part in how those forces might evolve, can a vision, a way out of the crisis, become manifest.

### **A New Source of Intention**

People are searching for ways to develop a new source of action, one that lies beyond preconceived plans or narrow self interest, beyond past experiences. For this to be possible it is necessary to provide opportunities to experience acting in the world, not on the world, to explore places and possibilities, strategies and prototypes for shifting from the past, to opening up to what might be emerging from the future. A place to do what needs to be done, for action as a spontaneous product of the whole.

### **Final Thought: The Next Evolutionary Step Will Be Cultural Not Technological**

*The schizophrenic split between supersensible conditions and physical conditions is something we have overcome and we can now head towards a new cultural epoch; or you can say: we have a new “cultural epoch”.*

Interview with Joseph Beuys, *What is Art?*, p. 77

MICHAEL KLIEN: This development that has been going on . . . towards a notion of “social” choreography . . . could it have a real impact in the wider social sphere . . . or will it remain on an abstract level as a terminology with a lot of potential but without physical effects?



STEVE VALK: Well . . . as James Hillman says, “We are standing in the storm of our own being.” We have been swept up into forces of our own making, whether it be our advanced technology, the globalized economy or the ever-increasing disruption and destruction of our ecosphere. If the awareness and development of strategies like “social choreography” gets stuck somewhere, it will not get stuck in one place but in many different places. Here I have to recall your dream Michael, about “taking part in a profound and massive demonstration against humanity”. If choreographers like Michael Klien and William Forsythe get stuck, then Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer, Betty Sue Flowers and Joe Jaworski, the enlightened business consultants at MIT, will also be stuck. Our good friends W. Gordon Lawrence and Bipin Patel doing Social Dreaming in London will get stuck. Al Gore and the deep ecologists, Jesper Hoffmeyer and the holistic biologists will get stuck. Cybernetic Epistemology, in the Batesonian sense of the word, and the theories of Einstein and Quantum Physics will be stuck.

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*The Cartesian split between mind and matter is no longer sustainable. The bringing forth of a world is made possible through the quality of our mental disposition for being available to connectedness that is made manifest in the matrix and, more generally, in the mental web of life that connects all humanity that is being postulated.*

W. Gordon Lawrence, *Experiences in Social Dreaming*, p. 270

So, not just artists and choreographers would be caught in the no man’s land of abstract ideas, in “the dogmatic slumber of reductionist thinking”, as Kiesler says; there would be a living matrix of people around the world and across many disciplines, unable to implement their ideas. There is a convergent new reality being postulated on many different levels. If things get stuck . . . as they might . . . it will be a shared stuckness.

### **Conclusion: On “Stuckness”**

*The old idea of a cell being like a sack full of proteins and all sorts of other good things has been supplanted by the contemporary view of the cell as having a complex inner structure that bears more resemblance to the structure of a city than to the structure of a sack of flour. But the point at which the true focus of this account starts to become clear is when we discover that it is precisely this freezing of the cell’s chemical make-up which institutes a totally new kind of freedom, one which I call . . . semiotic freedom. Because even the single-celled organism knew a little trick which proved most effective in . . . tempering the growth of*



MICHAEL KLIEN, STEVE VALK

*predictability. It was able to describe itself— or at least key aspects of itself— in an abstract code embedded in the string DNA molecule bases. Fragments of this coded self-description could then be copied, sometimes wrongly, and traded with other members of the same species — or even on occasion, with members of another species. The never — ending sequence of “mistakes” and “misunderstandings” that put life-forms on earth into a constant state of flux, the sequence which we call . . . organic evolution, was set in motion.*

Jesper Hoffmeyer, *Signs of Meaning in the Universe*, p. 29

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# frederick steier, daniel blaeuwer a choreography of cybernetics and performativity

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In one of the most clarifying ways of thinking about movement across boundaries, Ortega y Gasset talks of the exuberances and deficiencies of ALL utterances. He notes that every utterance is exuberant in that it says more than it intends. At the same time, he notes that every utterance is also deficient in that it says less than it wishes to say. Gregory Bateson's work builds on this in an interesting way by inviting us to think of all communication events as having both a content and relationship aspect. Indeed the relationship aspect may indicate the frame within which a message's content makes sense, or is made sense of. Bringing Bateson's formulation to Ortega's exuberances and deficiencies allows us to understand interaction between partners (in many senses of partnership) as including movement of many kinds — a choreography of a conversation where utterances blend with gesture and gesture with flow. It is in this spirit that we offer the following conversation (or is it a dance) between one concerned with performativity and one concerned with systems theory and cybernetics, where both partners come to recognize the movement to shared appreciation of relationships — their own and that of the traditions they seek to integrate. We try to depict this in a form that makes clear the process of the conversation — the relational aspect plus content — as an emergent dance form, while also a kind of thought experiment in visual depiction of a movement. At the same time, we recognize that we can only invite a different reading (Ortega's Difficulty of Reading, perhaps?) of a text, but cannot legislate the reader how to read our offering. We offer our comments about the process as a way of also marking the fluidity and open-endedness of our own process, at the same time wondering about how our framemaking is received.

Bringing our conversation to the page we used the conventions of print to layout and frame it. Knowing this requires extra work on the part of the reader, we offer this note on our process. The paper begins with two parallel introductions that we used to begin our conversation. Thereafter we used two graphic depictions of process to frame two different conversations. One conversation, which we invite you, the reader, to imagine as represented by patterns of dance steps, is a choreography between cybernetics and performativity. The second conversation, which we invite you to imagine as framed in

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systemic process diagrams, is a conversation offering reflections on our first conversation. In the end, the two conversations merge together in similar connections and as a single layout. The reading suggested with the paper's layout is, of course, only one possible reading and following Ortega y Gasset there are many more possibilities.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE

The editors acknowledge that this is not the authors' preferred version of their essay. Due to considerations of consistency of design and presentation, it was decided to publish a visually different version of the paper. The original can be viewed at [choreograph.net](http://choreograph.net), online home of Framemakers thinking, searchword "steier blaueur". The editors wish to thank Fred and Daniel for their cooperation and support, and for providing us such a valuable addition to the small but growing body of theory on Framing and Aesthetics of Change.

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### Cybernetics

*Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic philosopher, felt that everything was in flux, that there were no constancies. Parmenides, another pre-Socratic philosopher, stated that nothing really changed, and that, in effect, change was illusory. What could be more different — everything changes or nothing changes? Cybernetic and systems thinkers grapple with the same question of a relationship between change and stability, and relational thinking in general. Indeed, at the heart of Gregory Bateson's cybernetic program is precisely how systems manage to balance change and stability. Bateson's concern is significant not only in the way that it affords an approach to understanding and being, but also in its very formulation as a question that resists an either/or response, settling instead on a both/and approach. Change requires stability and stability requires change.*

*For Bateson, as for many other cyberneticians and systems thinkers, the root of this question of balance is one of governance.*

### Performativity

The Greek Philosopher Plato famously banished the performer and performances from his Republic because they faked an ideal "reality". Even today, performance suffers from the Platonic assumption that it is only faking reality and not making reality. Yet recently, two modern intellectual movements — the dramaturgical tradition of performance studies and the philosophical tradition of speech acts — have challenged this assumption. Both movements return performance from its exile to argue that in performance social life gets done. Performance becomes making and not faking.

Following these theories of acts, Judith Butler emerges to argue that even the assumption in performance of a "doer behind the deed" is false. Making her introduction within the context of gender theory, Butler argues that natural sexed bodies are only illusions maintained and created by the iterative citation of gender norms. She means simply that both sex and gender are

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*Indeed, the very root of the word cybernetics is that of a governor (kybernetes from the Greek). Here it is governing as a process focusing on how a system regulates itself so that what is essential to its identity can be maintained. Information, in the form of a difference that makes a difference, (a key phrase for Bateson) is noted and acted upon so that essential features may be maintained, while others are free to have their contours varied, as possibilities for the new are created. The balance between stability and change moves to a similar balance between tradition and innovation.*

*In exploring the process of self-regulation, cyberneticians also began to ask questions of how systems organize themselves, and how we organize ourselves, to be able to perform this remarkable balancing act. Circular processes of self-organization also become a focus, as do other recursive processes.*

*At the same time, questions of understanding were rooted in recognizing the importance of the larger system, the context, the frame, the entire ecology in which a self-regulating system is located.*

*We then might ask, how do we perform our ecological identity and still be able to respond to changing environments? Also, how do we frame a collective concern for this as a joint performance?*

performed. Again, performance is making. Yet, this is not to say “gender” or “sex” are fake copies of an ideal form; instead, the performance of gender, and more aptly gender performativity, suggests gender is materially productive of sexed bodies. It is the assumption of “natural” sexes supporting “social” genders and heterosexuality which is illusionary.

As a result, subjectivity is located between the individual performances, or citations of gender, and gender performativity, or the sedimented history of gender conventions. In this perspective, any individual citation of gender is governed and regulated by a sedimented history of gender norms. Yet, every individual performance of gender — while constrained by the sedimented history of gender — can operate to modify and change the very history that is the source of its citation. All gender performances are always already inside the very history they hope to change. A new paradox replaces an old paradox with a new care for how bodies come to matter.

One persistent question for performance and performativity, which cybernetics and systems theory may help explain, is the relationship between gender regulation and how this regulation of gender relates to the performances of everyday life.



Your comment got me thinking about two notions of regulation. In a larger part, it got me thinking about how stability and change operate together. For example, how gender can perpetuate itself and an illusion of stable gender categories. I think Judith Butler is trying to get us out of a linear view on gender that assumes sex leads to gender which in turn leads to sexual orientation. She does this by reflecting back on what we mean by sex. The basic premise in her work is to leave the meaning of sex permanently problematic. In other words, to question what we mean by sex, what we mean by women, what we mean by gender. I think there is a nice connection between performativity and cybernetics in the question of balance. That is how do we balance society with biology or balance the social categories with biology bodies. I think Anne Fausto Sterling offers a neat connection between gender theory and systems when she suggested looking at gender as a möbius strip. In a möbius strip, sex is always informing gender and gender is always informing sex.

[Here I was really thinking about gender as an organizing principle and the important discussion between sex and gender in feminist theory.]

*Your comments actually triggered a couple of things for me. The variety of ideas of gender as the basis for what you are talking*



*about is a great starting point. Naturally, I was thinking about it also in terms of other domains. Yet, what makes gender so striking is, that it is so easily defined in either/or categories, which is not something that might be such a dominant feature of other domains. But you could also think about what you are saying about gender performativity in terms of other performances. I was thinking about various national competitions in music where the idea is to offer the “best” rendition of a piece of traditional folk music. How is that judged? For example, one question is how much creativity in that tradition is allowed before that performed tune is no longer “that traditional tune”. How might a creative variation cross the boundary so that it loses the “tradition”? How much variation can actually be tolerated before that tune is not that tune, and how is that difference recognized and acted on? A similar question has arisen in public performances of the national anthem in the United States. This is frequently an issue when someone sings it and infuses it with newness. How much variation is ok before the performers are seen as violating its spirit? And does the setting or the frame matter for making that judgment? The same can hold for a traditional dance piece. How much variation can a choreographer introduce before that piece is not a piece that can have the same name? Is this a question of balancing tradition with change, or what?*

*[In my comment here I was dancing around and extending what I was hearing you say about gender, and linking it to systems notions of balancing tradition and change. I was trying to connect to your point while staying within my frame. At the same time, I think I was trying to get a little more concreteness through your examples so there was some movement on my part to the very abstract point I had at first made.]*

I hear what you are saying, but I am hesitant to move the discussion to different domains. Yet, I am thinking about how much variability we have in any gender performance until, of course, the punitive aspect of “you’re not performing it correctly” kicks in. What I mean is for many the performance of gender in everyday life is always a performance under duress. Meaning there are real consequences if, given a particular setting, you have performed gender in a way that is “unacceptable”. So there is always this question of variability. But I would ask to what degree and variability for whom? You can perform gender differently but it is always in the context of a performance in front of an audience that sanctions the performance as an acceptable and appropriate performance. Judith Butler makes it clear that an audience is really important to gender performativity and each individual performance by drawing on Austin’s notion of performative utterances.

[I think on one hand, I was hesitant to move away from gender, while also recognizing the importance of balance, change and regulation.]

*Again what is triggered for me is a movement to different situations. Cybernetics and systems thinking really encourages you to see similar patterns in very different domains, and that I think includes processes of circularity and selfreference. This brings us back to Austin’s notion of the performatives, where we, through the act of making an utterance, bring about that which the utterance “says”. Yet of course those performatives to be performatives require a certain context. A lot of the time we assume a context, which may or may not be the case. For example, since you just got married, Daniel, the minister saying, “I pronounce you man and wife” requires a particular*

*context and a shared appreciation for context for that utterance to actually have its performative valence. The same thing or words could be uttered in a different setting and it wouldn't work — so I am saying it now as an example and no new couple has been created! This raises questions which are at the heart of what both of us are concerned with — perhaps the intersection of performativity and cybernetics is really a shared appreciation of a particular frame which allows the performative to work. And that is also related to, in the same way, recognition that balancing tradition and innovation also requires a certain frame for an appreciation of that balance.*

*How do we make those frames in this spirit?*

*[Here I jumped on the opportunity to form a stronger connection with what I said earlier, where I was using your example to trigger related examples, and I believe I was looking at the notion of the performative as an organizing principle that connected cybernetics and systems with performance, through the work of Austin and Searle. I was thinking of the performative as a reflective idea that embodied notions of circularity. At the same time, I saw the emergence of the idea of frame as an organizing principle, which is at the intersections of our joint interest.]*

The notion of a frame is really important. Judith Butler's classic example of a transvestite on a stage verses the transvestite on the bus really brings this home. For example, the transvestite on the stage is always operating under the theatrical frame of "this is only a play"; where as, the transvestite on the bus is in a different frame where the self-referential comment "this is only an act" will not work. Judith Butler suggests that different contexts and frames risk different consequences. So maybe there is a question



of framemaking at the heart of performance and performativity. The need to know what frame we are working in and how gender performances are interpreted is important because they have real influences and consequences for people's safety.

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[In this section what I was trying to get to was that even though performativity would not use the word frame they would use Austin's notion of the performative and stress that something gets done in the performance. Yet, different frames operate with very real consequences for the way people live their lives. These differences matter, in Judith Butler's use of the term, to what lives are livable.]

*One of the other hallmarks of cybernetics that I think we are touching on is something that was developed in the mid sixties, although I suppose it was there all along. It was primarily brought out by Margaret Mead and Heinz von Foerster, although of course others were involved — and that is the idea of applying cybernetics to itself. A second orderness, a cybernetics of cybernetics, which focused on the role of us as observers in constructing our world the way that we do. Rather than assume stability, we ask questions about how we create perceptions of a stable world, for example. This second order move introduced a cybernetics of observing systems and opened up questions of: How is it that we create the frames that we do rather than assuming the frame was there for the taking before hand? It raised questions about how we think about our being and becoming, and it raised questions about our processes of knowing — but in a manner that also generated questions about our participating in the construction of those very things we are seeking to understand. And here it seems to raise a lot of questions about how in the performance of gender*





*we do the same, in terms of making distinctions about what counts as a safe stage. There is a sense of issues of aesthetics and ethics of our creating processes that coincide with this responsibility. Of course, with this responsibility, we inherit a vulnerability — as we actually go out on a limb and try to recreate and reframe a space so that the performances we want to bring about are possible.*

*[Here what I was doing was really reflecting on our process, by stepping back, and bringing in notions of second order cybernetics. It almost seemed to be a distancing maneuver by engaging at a different level.]*

I like the idea of risking new frames and I think it begs questions of values and more generally questions of aesthetics. It seems both traditions have similar ideas about language and subjectivity and that “we” are implicated in our particular ways of framing or creating a self. And I think both systems and performativity have similar ideas of what the self is, but more importantly, they seem to share the recognition that questions of value and aesthetics are important. For example, performativity argues that how we give an account of ourselves has an influence on how others live their lives, or what lives are livable. I think as we look back on gender performances, or performances in general, it is important to note that how we give accounts of ourselves matters and is always a question of values and aesthetics. This might be a shared question.

*Hey, there is something intriguing about what you are saying, again coming from the reflexive aspect of cybernetics which is coming from its focus on circularity. For example, how*





*we think about our doing everyday life is a story that we tell ourselves about ourselves and one we do with others. We might even raise questions about who are we as constructed by our relevant others, as part of our understanding of ourselves in our everyday life. Our self-creation is not done in a relational vacuum. So there is a nice oscillating aspect between progresses of a “self-and-other construction” in a similar pattern between stability and change, or tradition and innovation.*

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[I was seeing your question as an opportunity to talk about values and valuing. The values of reflexivity, and even a radical reflexivity which creates itself in its own doing. What I saw as interesting is how your comments foregrounds our ethical responsibility for what we are doing in and with particular frames.]

And, I would suggest that a similar pattern between performance and performativity is also important. Each individual performance requires an audience and no performance is separate from a history of performance or from an audience. This, of course, is the separation between performance and performativity. In a way this is a circular paradox and I think the recognition of the circularity of it is important. The realization that what we think of gender influences what we think about bodies and vices versa. Bodies are not a resting ground outside of this circular paradox. But there is also a connection in the general idea of performance, that performances give us an opportunity to reflect back on our lives. Victor Turner provides one example of the reflexive aspects of performance.





[Here I was really seeing two things. First who we are or who we think we are is not done in a vacuum. And what I think it really rests on is the distinction between performance and performativity — or if you will act and script, or performer and performance — which is really at the heart of ideas of performativity. For me, it became really important to see it as a circular process and a circular paradox.]

*[Here I was recognizing that I had in making the second order move before, jumped back, and I was really trying to engage with your question through the ideas of oscillation, aesthetics, values and ethics. Not necessarily doing it from the questions emerging from systems but really trying to engage in some of your questions. Maybe, I was trying a frame experiment, in Don Schön's sense, testing to see a possible joint frame for us.]*

*I was thinking about this even in terms of how we began our conversation. We are starting from very different points each of which requires a kind of frame reflection. In ways we are unconcealing each other's background. Notions of performativity, as you are describing them, connect so strongly to an idea that is actually at the heart of cybernetics — and that is the idea of governance and self-regulation. Geoffrey Vickers speaks of governance as an organizing theme of cybernetics and systems in ways that emphasize the processes of self-correction, of recognizing the need to appreciate and then make adjustments, within a tradition. At the same time there is a particular reliance on cybernetic notions of recursion which are at the heart of performativity. It is funny if we step back and reflect on what we are actually doing here in this conversation it is really creating a dance or merging of different paths that are intertwining, almost like your möbius strip*





*precisely making this movement of joint self-correction, of mutual governance. Well, maybe.*

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I agree and suggest thinking of the self-regulation not in terms of a thermostat but in terms of a process of regulation. This advice, of course, is Foucault's insight. To take it further we might think of regulation as grounded in our acts of doing. Which, in the context of gender performativity, seems to be the idea that gender is something we are creating as we are doing it — which is self-maintaining. And it could maintain itself differently, but there is no center, no body, and no ground to it. Which is a neat connection to cybernetics applied to itself.

*[Here I jumped levels again, I guess I do that, and really started to comment on our process itself in our conversation. And if I do that here in what we are doing right now, in our reflection, I would recognize that of course we are making a choice that we are reflecting on what we saw our comments doing in our interaction. We could have easily flipped this around, so I am commenting on how I saw what you were doing and you could comment on what I was doing. And that would work for another paper. But, at the same time, I am recognizing that if I step back even further, that what we are really doing as we move forward in this conversation, is that the "I" doing this reflection is in the process of becoming very much of a relational "I". That is to say, as we have been talking we have not only been saying what I was doing myself but locating it in the conversation which is kind of interesting because I don't think we planned on that. It has an emergent quality.]*

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*That actually makes me think of something else. The dominant metaphor of early cybernetics is often thought to be the thermostat. We have a process of self-regulation that requires information about a difference that makes a difference and an ability to act on that difference — to lessen it or perhaps increase it. We ask similar questions of our bodies — how is it that our bodies are able to maintain themselves at a particular temperature. How do our bodies recognize when they are too warm or too cold. But does even formulating the question this way require the notion that there need be some fixed point about which that something — too warm or too cold — could be detected? Maybe what you are suggesting is that in many arenas we need to let go of this fixed point as a fixed point because a fixed point requires someone determining what that fixed point actually is. And maybe letting go of that grounding actually sees the grounding in more of the process — a process of self-correction and learning. And maybe that is at the heart of the cybernetic enterprise as well as the performative enterprise.*

Okay, I will agree circularity, recursion, making, and doing seem to be at the heart of both traditions. As a community, I think both traditions can continue and ask the important questions about living within frames of our own making.

[I think that the last two parts of this conversation are the closest we came to actually finding moments of meeting in the conversation. We were coming back to what we were willing to agree on and what we are not. And really agreeing — I think — on ideas of regulation, self-organization, and circularity. And maybe, we agree in a larger part on the importance of performance. We seem



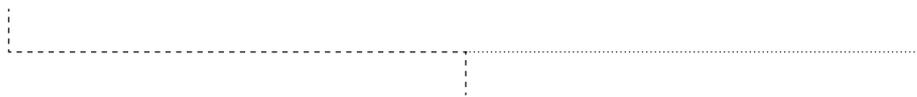


to be recognizing that our work here in this conversation, is itself a performance. In a way the conversation is becoming more and more relational. Separating out each other seems to be paradoxical, as everything becomes a relational dance or a möbius strip. It is interesting that this is happening here in this conversation given that this paradox, at one level or another, seems important to both traditions.]

*Which I think brings us back to an aesthetic of frames and how we need to see ourselves as a producer of the frame at the same time we see what we are doing as existing within a frame. Whether the frame is a stage, a backstage, a bus, a classroom or a twentieth century church.*

*[This was interesting because I see what you just did as commenting not just on one offering but on a larger sequence. And I think we moved to larger sets and I was actually thinking I was doing the same as I was looking at the whole last sequence and realizing that our focus has really shifted from the context to really paying close attention to the process. Which is what we are inviting the reader to do — to read it as much as an emerging dance than specific ideas linking systems and performativity and systems. And again, that brings us to our notion of an aesthetics of frames — which is actually how we started off.]*





## The Wrap Up

We have presented a snapshot of a dance of the interplay of performativity, systems thinking and cybernetics. The snapshot is intended to foreground BOTH the content and process aspects of the dance in an aesthetics of movement. Heinz von Foerster has offered an aesthetic imperative of acting so as always to increase the available choices, and we would submit that our aesthetic of movement act in this way, rooted in appreciation of its affirmation of the other while aware of its generative potential. So we ask the following questions of ourselves and of you, the reader, going back to our introduction, extending a conversation between Ortega and Bateson and Judith Butler: What are the exuberances and deficiencies of a conversation? In a conversation?

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What are the exuberances and deficiencies of a conversation that is also aware of its interplay of content and relationship aspects with each other, and with the reader? What are the exuberances and deficiencies of a conversation about the conjoining of performativity and systems thinking and cybernetics. In terms of performativity and systems thinking and cybernetics?

In reflecting on choices made in the paper, we note that we each commented on what we said in the conversation. We could just as easily have offered reflections on what was going on by noting what we thought the other was saying — but then perhaps we moved from an “I” as a solitary person — this is what I was thinking when I said this — to a more relational “I” that is part of a “WE”. How would we know this parallel in our reflections on the process of the original content conversation?

And thinking about this, does our own process embody the self-correction as a self-governing mutual process — in performativity, in cybernetics, and in the coupling of performativity and cybernetics — that we advocate for others. Have we created a frame for appreciating the self-corrections at the heart of an aesthetics of change? The conjoining of which we speak would also encourage us to understand the larger cultural frame in which we act, but also at the same time to take responsibility for the frame we make in the process of our conversation.

So perhaps ultimately the interconnectedness of performativity and cybernetics generates a framemaking for coupling?



## REFERENCES

Gregory Bateson developed his theory of frames throughout his career. For a discussion of his ideas of frames and framemaking, the reader is directed to Bateson's essay, *A Theory of Play and Fantasy*, published in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Ballantine Books, 1972, University of Chicago Press, reissue, 2000). Bateson's ideas on change and stability surface throughout the essays in that book as well as in his later *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (E. P. Dutton, 1979). A clear statement of his notion of the difference that makes a difference can be found in the essay, *Form, Substance and Difference*, also in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Jose Ortega y Gasset's ideas of exuberances and deficiencies, which provided a starting point, can be found in his *Man and People* (Norton, 1957) and his essay, *The Difficulty of Reading*, in *Diogenes*, 28 (winter 1959).

We refer to the majority of Judith Butler's development of performativity. For an introduction, we suggest her *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, in *Theater Journal* (December 1988, 49(1): 519–531). Anne Fausto-Sterling's description of gender as a Möbius strip is found in her *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (Basic Books, 1990). Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality: Volume One* (Vintage, reissue, 1990) discusses the role of regulation in society. Victor Turner introduced the subjective mood in *The Anthropology of Performance* (PAJ Books, second edition, 1986) to explain performances that commented on the frames of social life.

J. L. Austin presented the concept of performative utterances in a series of lectures published in *How to Do Things with Words* (Harvard University Press, 1962). John Searle's development of this work can be found in his *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1969). Our conversational essay relies heavily on notions of second order cybernetics. A good starting point for this is the work of Margaret Mead, *Cybernetics of Cybernetics*, in H. von Foerster, J. D. White, L. J. Peterson and J. K. Russell (eds.), *Purposive Systems: The First Annual Symposium of the American Society for Cybernetics* (Spartan, 1968). Notions of second order cybernetics also permeated the work of Heinz von Foerster, and the reader may find many key papers in his collection, *Observing Systems* (InterSystems, 1981). Within our second order cybernetics framework, we also rely on Foerster's ethical and aesthetic imperatives, which he first noted in the essay, *On Constructing a Reality*, in F. E. Preiser (ed.), *Environmental Design Research, Volume II* (Stroudberg, Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, 1973) and is recently developed in F. Steier and J. Jorgenson's essay in honor of Foerster, *Ethics and Aesthetics of Observing Frames* (*Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, 10, 2003). We also rely on Geoffrey Vickers' ideas of the role of values, valuing, and governance in social systems, as well as his notion of appreciative systems. These can be found in his *Value Systems and Social Process* (Tavistock, 1968). Donald Schön's idea of frame experiments and frame reflection, key concepts noted in our reflections on our conversation appear in his *The Reflective Practitioner* (Basic Books, 1983).

# basta! youth collective the choreography of cut 'n' paste

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CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE



# dylan haskins, jeffrey gornly dialogue: space to play

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In 2004 Daghdha Dance Company invited members of Basta! Youth Collective to visit with us in Limerick and be present at the opening weekend of *Framemakers Public Thinktank*. We also commissioned them to make a response to our project in the form of a zine, which they compiled on their second visit to *Public Thinktank* some three weeks later. In September of that year Basta! Youth Collective collaborated with *Framemakers* to produce a gig on the roof of the Project Arts Centre in Dublin as part of *Framemakers*' social choreography *A Theatre Congress: Seven Days of Everything*. Dylan Haskins, a prominent member of the collective, appeared as a guest interviewee in the same week's events. I caught up with him in early 2007, again at the Project Arts Centre, to make this interview.

JG: *I'm wondering what your mature thoughts a year later would be on choreography as an aesthetics of change and framemaking. has any of it stayed with you?*

DH: the main project we're doing at the moment is a film, originally it was about basta but I couldn't see any potential coming out of that documentation other than "this is what happened" so the documentary we're making is about the ideas and the ethics of the people in diy culture — how it works within the punk scene and the extended scene at that — to try and open the ideas up — the diy scene can only work on a small basis but that would go in with a lot of our thinking that society can only work on a small community basis and all these communities linked up so we want to make and tour this film and be there to give talks hands on — I always reference the talk that was in the cube downstairs with the panel<sup>1</sup>) and the sombre weird atmosphere at the end — these women came up to me saying "I really hope you can make a change in the world" — these people won't be able to access these ideas with blaring music in their ears so what we're trying to do is put the ideas in a format that is totally accessible and be there as people as well — I guess in a sense you're trying to choreograph lives a bit or try to influence how they might perceive to do that themselves — providing a guide

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book would be totally ironic cos its nothing to do with the impulse of it so that's why I wanna just put the ideas out there using a case study so that people can say "oh" and then apply it to their own lives themselves

*so what's the name of the new collective?*

it doesn't have a name yet we found that a large collective it was too hard to keep everybody involved and actually get anything done — it was definitely a structure flaw — it was easy to get stuff done when there was four or five of us and then when it was opened up there was no structure built in for people to be able to get involved — if its just a closed few people you're not really getting many new ideas in — so we're trying to get the best of both worlds — it's a project based collective in that it's project cells — a project could be one person or three people — and each project is totally autonomous within the collective — it's a better way of working that you can focus on something and if nothing interests you in what the collective are doing then you can start your own project — it's much more informal — we're not doing the meetings where everyone was sitting around in a circle cos some people are afraid to speak in that type of scenario so in the house I'm living in now we've decided that every Friday we're gonna have a vegetarian or vegan open dinner where people would just be hanging around chatting before they go out whatever that night — its the best type of format for discussion if you're sitting around eating — we also found that it was a lot to do with the loss of paddy's hall as well when that place was demolished and made into apartments — the collective very much revolved around that space and using that space and when that space was gone it was too hard to find a new place so that sort of killed it as well — it came to a stage where the only time you would see the community would be during parties when people would be drinking and stuff like that and it's a great atmosphere for ideas but it's a bad atmosphere for actually following through on anything — so the dinners before people go out on their Friday night would be a cool way to sort of just chat and hang around — it makes it opener to new people as well

*so it's a social space and all you have to do is be*

yeah and things can happen organically out of that — we had sort of a seed meeting and the collective came out of this — everything seems to be interlinked within it so we've got these three or four main longterm continuous projects and then hopefully



other once-off projects — organising a certain gig on a certain day could be a project — but those longterm focus projects are in itself what make the collective — if the dinner was a project in itself then that project is the basis of the collective, it wouldn't work without that project and the same with the film — the first project is the film and the film is about the first project and the collective and it coming about — it all ties back into itself that way

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*what's your motivation? why are you doing stuff in a social context as opposed to just making the movie yourself with your mates. why this openness, why "collective"?*

my very initial motivation was just boredom where I was living — its got away past that stage now where I'm just up to my eyes all the time but I think I thrive on the excitement of it and all these links forged in different countries and friends that I've made in different places — I think it's the potential that from my political beliefs . . . — I'm an anarchist so I don't believe that if overnight there was a revolution the society that has been built would be able to cope with that — I don't think it would be able to make a transition — the best I've found from what we've been doing — sort of a micro level way that's really sustainable and very fulfilling — I think that's the motivation anyone looks for in life

I think the best thing we can do at the moment through this way that we've found of living is to try and educate people so that they can find ways of putting these ideas into practice in their own lives — it's not a case of the good Samaritan — the more people doing this the bigger a network — I like to see links develop into other aspects and other communities and other people — what we're doing in the documentary is also trying to look at people that are doing projects that are diy that don't even know that diy exists — people doing it without realising it because it's a natural impulse to do stuff yourself — we do it ourselves because we want to not because we have to — when we went to limerick with Daghdha in the church we were going to get some food and we found a flyer on the ground for a gig that was hand-written and we were like "look at that. right we've gotta find these kids" so we see these group of kids standing around and it turned out to be the kids organising the gig who since then have put on countless gigs and we've put on their bands and a friendship developed — we interviewed them about it and they hadn't heard about diy some of them and now they've got their own really strong collective down in limerick called organized chaos doing gigs regularly so its nice to see links like that come about — maybe you can give a better understanding

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or a better drive to people if they're doing it themselves, saying "yeah look there's other people using the same thought process as you"

*do you want to change society or are you happy just to make a nourishing situation for yourself and your peers or — second or — is it about creating an alternative reality that is there for people to choose*

its a mix between the third and the first — it's definitely trying to change society, that's another major drive — even if you're just trying to do the smallest thing I think its impossible to try and live in this society with a clear conscience and not try and do anything — a lot of kids get involved in byc because its another option and they see it as something different and they just get hooked — some people don't — a lot of people are conditioned to a different way of living — sometimes they can be totally daunted by it — there was a band that came to play in paddy's hall they came in with all their massive expensive equipment and we showed them where the gig was which was a little room at the back of the hall not the big main hall and they were sort of looking around looking at each other — they played and now they're all friends with everybody else in the scene and they're totally integrated and they're in new bands and stuff like that its funny how your first impression . . . I'll never forget their faces when they came into it and now just chatting to them normally — they know what its like — I've put on gigs in my house which is about the same size as this room and bands are calling asking can they play — you get about fifty people max squashed into the room and other people standing around — it's a different experience and a different way of interacting with people — you're there on a parallel level rather — I was talking to a girl loosely connected with the scene through other people — she was at one of the gigs and I was asking her about the bands and she hadn't seen any she said she just goes to the gigs to talk to people — its a nice alternative social reality — sometimes we can be a bit too concerned with ourselves but I think its necessary to try and further your own community and find ways to spread your ideas and its also about having fun its definitely about having fun — the mix of the whole culture that goes with it is another reality — it's not trying to escape from what's here, its trying to . . . not integrate it but show a working model of a different way of doing things so that people can see this working model and this working model can grow so maybe if its in a ratio thing one day this working model will be bigger than what we have now



*how would you describe how these two realities get on with each other: your reality that you work on and in, and the mainstream or however you frame that — the thing that is not what you are — what are the qualities of the skin contact between them?*

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its impossible to totally live outside of the mainstream at the moment, I think its been crafted that its impossible to totally live outside of it, the clothes I'm wearing the way I travelled here its all part of that structure — you can't totally shut yourself out from all of that unless you want to just go live in the woods — but there's a difference between say buying a certain brand and organising something that's sponsored by that brand, there's a very different line there — I think what we're trying to do is build ways and find ways so that there's less of it in each way — the idea with the dinner is you're cooking together and we want to grow vegetables so we're creating our own means with the resources we've got and you can only do what you've got with the resources you've got otherwise you're just crippling yourself and you can't *you won't* do anything — it means you're constantly weighing stuff up and weighing stuff up and none of us are perfect we all know that, we *all* partake — we've written songs about the fact that sometimes you go watch a movie in a shopping centre which is the culture that you despise but it could be a really good movie (laughing)

*is the mainstream reality willing to let you be and let your reality grow or does it not want that to happen — is there enough space for both — do you have to make a lot of effort to make space for your reality*

yeah we definitely have to make a big effort — the mainstream is content to let the diy continue on until it sees it as a real threat and there are times when it does see that as a threat and it definitely *definitely* doesn't want to see it happening — one of the main reasons I think we lost paddy's hall was because the gards<sup>2</sup>) found out who the owners were and were able to contact them and tell them that they were having trouble which was a load of rubbish but they wanted us out of there and they got us out of there — and the reality is that property prices are insane in Ireland fullstop so its really hard to get a space to do stuff — it's a really essential thing that you need space just to talk or organise or get your heads together — the mainstream that's here keeps eating and eating and eating and taking in everything that it can — its like a big fat person trying to sit beside you on the bus and you've just gotta hold your own in it — that's why the old collective petered out because there was no conscious definite effort being made — its easy how quickly it





comes back again to what's already been built when you do make that effort — that's a matter of getting it just in time — it could easily have just fizzled out because there was nowhere for us to do anything

*you talk about conditioning . . . do you feel it necessary to also create or manifest space in people's heads or in their lives or in their imaginations free from the conditioning?*

I think everything is interlinked — I think that space is made up by the way of living and by the fulfilment that I get out of doing something within the diy scene — the fulfilment opens up a whole new area in your mind — its why I got hooked on it and involved with it in the first place, going to this gig, being totally overwhelmed by what was there — that feeling creates a sort of excitement in your head and it gets you thinking about other things but you can only do so much thinking before you actually need to do stuff so I think *that* space is totally interlinked with physical space as well

*so . . . you have some experience that overwhelms you or that comes in and cracks open space in your mind or in your being or in your body*

yeah

*in your life as you conceive it, but if sooner or later you don't do something that comes out of that — physically manifest something out of that — then that space will just close up again*

yeah exactly

*so you need physical space in which to act on your impulse and that keeps the space open or opens new spaces*

yeah it opens new spaces definitely and it makes more of those spaces away from the conditioning — it opens up spaces within that conditioning and starts to move that conditioning and you start to see and you start to make links between everything else — you start to see the bigger picture — I think it all comes to unlocking that

*the basta space is closed now but the energy there is a new space that has opened*





I don't think we've still found a space so we're trying to work on creating a different type of space that isn't reliant on the music and a different way of going — we're trying to look at other ways to do what it is exactly we want to do

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*I really observe in you guys a frustration of being young and not taken seriously and slightly bullied by adults like with the police and I'm observing now that as i get older i have less and less space to do things — certainly that's been true in my life I don't how I could pull off the kind of things I pulled off when I was nineteen — that even as you become supposedly more empowered as a human and as an adult there's actually less space for you to do stuff something different something else*

I think you've less time — you've loads of time to think about stuff when you're younger and you've loads of things you want to do but you've nowhere to do it really and then you get older and you do get physical space but then you forget what it is you wanted to do with it because you haven't been doing it — making the decision to dissolve the collective and even to forget the name — the name had been known — is another example of when something that is healthy gets established it can get problems so I think we wanted to examine those problems — its organic that something starts, goes to a certain stage, there's problems with it at that stage, you see what those problems are, you see if you can deal with them, if it can't be dealt with within what's there or even if it *can* be sometimes its better to just break down start afresh — this cycle of starting stopping keep going reassessing where you're at — it's a constant re-evaluation of yourself — the fact that you've come together to make that decision in itself is a great thing in that people still care and you're getting them in that crucial stage so now these people have a fresh drive and a fresh direction and they know what they want to do — create a platform — I think that it's important to try and bridge the gap between younger to older as you get older

*that's something about diy as well is that something happens and it dies then something else happens and it too dies. is that natural?*

I think it's totally natural I mean look at life people come people die people go

*but the culture that is counter to you, "mainstream" culture is all about things staying the same, things lasting*





## DIALOGUE: SPACE TO PLAY

yeah and I think that stagnancy is what frustrates a lot of people to try and seek something else that maybe isn't as definite — I know with myself that if I could foresee what I'd be doing when I'm older I'd be totally bored — it comes down to fulfilment — if you're doing lots of different things I think you're making more of a person out of yourself through more experiences you're having with the world

## REFERENCES

- 1) *Seven Days of Everything*, day 5.
- 2) Garda Siochana, Irish police force.

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## CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# jeffrey gornly report: seven days of everything

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*It would be good if actors worked on cities. If they abandoned their traditional acting and became fully engaged in transforming the city. This would be a great hope . . . Can one conceive what would happen if actors suddenly became builders!*

Daniel Liebeskind, *The End of Space*

*Framemakers* — *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change: Public Thinktank*, Limerick, took place in May/June 2005, comprising a month-long open social space, with an intensive week of discussions, roundtables, artistic interventions and presentations from leading world thinkers.

In response to the Dublin Fringe Festival 2005, we named our second *Framemakers* action *A Theatre Congress: Seven Days of Everything*. It was conceived as a work which responded to the civic function of theatre and the use of theatrical space and knowledge as a public utility: what is the most useful thing to do with a theatre for a week? Hence the inclusion of a dance company production in a theatre programme.

Forming a strategic partnership with TASCQ (Traders in the Area Supporting the Cultural Quarter), Steve Valk created a dramaturgy entitled *Seven Days of Everything*, and began to work our way into the social and cultural fabric of Temple Bar, and to develop an ecology: a constellation of people connected by the project, and an ecological and aesthetic attention to the way in which the project developed. As opposed to aiming for a predictable outcome, could we create the conditions for an unpredictable event to take place, arising out of interactions between a network of citizens whose relationship to each other is contextualised by their encounter with *Framemakers*?

In the course of our preparation for *Seven Days of Everything*, we enjoyed a social afternoon with residents of Crampton Buildings in Temple Bar, the only remaining indigenous community in Temple Bar; we created a small sit-down area at the Saturday food market in Meetinghouse Square and used a “creative survey” to engage the public in discussions about *Framemakers* themes; attended a Residents Forum Meeting held at Dublin Civic Offices Wood Quay; addressed the Attic Actors Studio in Filmbase.

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As the project developed we decided to use a talkshow format to facilitate our assemblage of interesting people and objects, and this provided the substance of our daily performances.

Besides conducting the *Seven Days of Everything Talk Show* each night of our residency in the Project Arts Centre, we also co-hosted with CityArts Dublin a discussion on Theatre in the City: Dialogue and Dissent, chaired by Aisling Reidy, director of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and a balcony concert hosted by Basta! Youth Collective featuring local bands, attended by over 200 people on East Essex Street. Our “set” was open during the day as a social space and facilitated many encounters between residents and workers in Temple Bar, visitors to Dublin, and participants in the Dublin Fringe Festival.

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## Press Release

### *Framemakers: A Theatre Congress*

Project Arts Centre Cube, East Essex Street, Temple Bar, Dublin

Monday, September 19–Sunday, September 25, 2005

Open rehearsals: 10 AM–5 PM

Evening presentations: 8 PM–9.30 PM

Tickets: Free

### *Framemakers: A Theatre Congress*

**for a New Millennium and the Traders in the Area Supporting the Cultural Quarter present**

### *Seven Days of Everything*

“A choreography of the social” by the citizenry of Dublin’s Temple Bar and the project team of *Framemakers* — *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*.

Who are *we*? What is a cultural quarter? Are paintings useful? *Do theatre ideas influence city planning?* Everyone knows, if we don’t eat or drink, we die. What we are not aware of, is that if we are disturbed from entering into the dreaming phase of our sleep, we

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





die just as quickly. *Our ability to dream, to process experiences in the subconscious, is our ability to survive.*

Temple Bar is on the one hand a geographical place, an area of streets and stores, restaurants and shops, a commercial district in the city. But it is also a nighttown, a dreamscape, a strange terrain of exotic personalities, ideas, objects, furniture, films, books and food types. It is a place teeming with experiential links, actual interfaces, to the imaginary. With the turn of a step, or a journey up a flight of stairs, it is possible to enter a new world, a secret bookshop, an unusual religious practice, an esoteric healing experience . . . The “cultural quarter” is both a physical place and a metaphysical territory and both far exceed our ability to experience their richness in totality.

Daghda Dance Company’s contribution to the Dublin Fringe Festival is an extension of its *Framemakers* programme entitled *Seven Days of Everything*.

### **He Drank His Milk, He Bit Into a Sandwich**

A social choreographic event, a theatre congress, a civic gathering, *Seven Days of Everything* involves in its initial phase (already in progress) a kind of rigorous anthropological exploration of the people and places in Temple Bar. The project then begins a process of mobilizing citizens, artists and practitioners of all sorts, as a means of gathering impressions, exchanging ideas and initiating potential activities. Finally, this matrix of active participants will begin a process of weaving, constructing and choreographing a rich and complex web or tapestry of everything it has found or discovered. From Monday, September 19 to Sunday, September 25, *Framemakers* will transform the Project Arts Centre into an experiential interface, a place to encounter and engage with the fullness and rich complexity of human being in Temple Bar.

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#### **Monday**

Film clip from *Easy Rider* DVD / Readings from *Robinson Crusoe* / Jack Moylett on Willem Reich and Orgone / Dominique Beyans on an artistic adaptation of Chess



**Tuesday**

Film clip from *Network* / Readings from *The Silver Key* by H. P. Lovecraft / Robin Parmar, sound artist / Karisma, rapper / Noeleen Hartigan, policy coordinator, Simon Community / Pauly D, rapper / Nicole Peisl, dancer / Participatory mind poem

**Wednesday**

Film clip from *The Day the Earth Stood Still* / Michael John Gorman, curator, Free the Robots! / Manouche guitar music from Jose Carlos Anselmo and friend / Readings from *Culture Novels* by Ian M. Banks / Flavia Pawlowski, Boitatá — Brazilian eco-solidario crafts / Readings from *Old Testament* by Anthony Carrack, Simon Community / Martin Giannini, cultivate.ie on the Art of Living / Refreshment interruption courtesy of Lem-onjelly Café / Participatory mind poem

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**Thursday**

Afternoon discussion co-presented by *Framemakers* and CityArts: *Theatre in the City: Dialogues and Dissent*; Speakers: Nona Ciobanu, artistic director, Toaca Cultural Foundation and Michael Klien, artistic director, Daghdha Dance Company; Chair: Aisling Reidy, Irish Council for Civil Liberties

Film clip from *Communion* / Soundtrack by Alex Ebauche, electronic artist / Peter Mikl, cultural attaché, Austrian Embassy / Readings from *Earth Abides* by George R. Stewart, read and introduced by actor Chris Carroll / Aisling Reidy, Irish Council for Civil Liberties / Readings from *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind* by Jeffrey Gormly, read by P. J. Kelly, Irish Blood Services Board / Participatory mind poem

**Friday**

Afternoon event: *We Love Lego We Love Playstation*; Open play with Jacob, Tariq, Naomi and Shane

Film clip from *The Philadelphia Story* / Juices and Guarana drink from Brazil courtesy of Delicias do Brasil / Dylan Haskins, Basta! Youth Collective / Readings from *The Eye of the Queen* by Philip Mann / Tarik Carrigy (8 years) playing Playstation in interview / Lego objects by Jacob Wolfe / Yoga for children with Anne Marie Carney and her Yogabugs / Maura McGrath, daughter of one of the RosSPORT 5 / Participatory mind poem

**Saturday**

Balcony concert by Basta! Youth Collective

Guest Pat Liddy, Temple Bar historian / Readings from *Ulysses* special edition by actress Regan O'Brien, nervousystem / Dance performance featuring excerpts from the Seven Days Creative Survey / Songs from singer and songwriter Rebecca Hart / Original prose and poetry from the Simon Community, read by Paddy Walsh / Short walking tour led by Pat Liddy visiting site of premiere of Handel's *Messiah* and Dublin city wall foundations at Isolde's Tower

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**Sunday**

Film clip from *The Philadelphia Story* / Brendan O'Byrne, professor of Consciousness, TCD / Appearance by the Silver Man, performance artist / Virtual theatre: *A Trip to Space* by Soul Gun Warriors / Japanese tea ceremony with Dmitri Maslov / Film clip from *Framemakers* interview with Mark Patrick Hederman, Glenstal Abbey / Readings from *The Place of Dead Roads* and *The Job* by William S. Burroughs / Anthony Fox, the New Theatre

Project leaders: Jeffrey Gormly, Michael Klien, Steve Valk

Assistance: Marion Pierce

Videography and editing: Davide Terlingo

Technician: Dave Guy

Furniture courtesy of Flanagan's Furniture, Mount Merrion

Philippe Starck lamp by HAUS

Matchstick models by Liam Mixer Byrne

Tree loaned by the Irish Film Institute

"seven musics to change a world by" courtesy of Morgan, City Discs

Blackboard by Temple Bar Information Centre

Stuffed cockerel by Lemonjelly Café

Frames loaned by the National Photographic Archive

Chilean photo show and traditional music provided by Ricardo

Rubbings by Mary B. Keane

DVD by Francis Fay, courtesy of the artist

DVDs by Francis Fay and Mary B. Keane, courtesy of the artists

Painting loaned by the artist, Olive Barrett

Gremlin emerging from wall courtesy of Christy Flood, Modelmania, Crow Street  
*Ulysses* special edition thanks to Cathach Books, Duke Street

Thanks to: St. Nicholas of Myra, Francis Street for teapot; Christian Brothers, Synge Street and Blooms Hotel, Anglesea Street for accommodation; Talk & Surf, Wexford Street for technical comms; Willie, Siobhan, David and all staff at the Project Arts Centre; Claudine, Lisa and Martin at TASCQ; Francis, Mary and residents of Cramp-ton Buildings; Temple Bar Properties; Wolfgang, Adrian, technical crew and all at the Dublin Fringe Festival; Martin Keane

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### Colin Murphy

#### Transformative Theatre at the Fringe

*The Village Magazine*, September 29, 2005

The *avant garde* had a distinctly retro look at the Fringe last week. Project's downstairs theatre space may be more used to experimental, abstract productions, but for the entire week it was transformed into a cross between a GP's waiting room and a talk-show studio. The *Framemakers* crew had spent the preceding days wandering through Temple Bar, begging and borrowing furniture and decorations for their *Seven Days of Everything* project. The result was an elegant brown leather suite (replete with its productplacement price tag), some art on the walls and various bits of eclectic clutter. Wandering in around 7 PM on Saturday evening — the space was open all week to wanderers, with a promise of tea, coffee and chat — host Steve Valk was animatedly talking to Dublin historian Pat Liddy, an American singer was tuning a guitar, and Jeffrey Gormly was wolfing down fish and chips. Turned out there was a show on that evening — I'd missed that in the programme. I hung around. Tickets were free. People drifted in, and then a decent sized crowd for 8 PM. *Framemakers* had billed this as "an effort to expose and make sense of [the] potential for profound transformative innovation in our present day situation". But by the time it got started, it became clear that — lofty ideologies notwithstanding — this was to be nothing more, and nothing less, than a good old fashioned cabaret/talk show miscellany. Steve Valk was a gregarious and gentle guide to the evening. His main guest, Pat Liddy, gave an enthused and informed discourse on Dublin. They meshed on ideas of public space and civic engagement. (In case we missed it, a hand-drawn card-



board sign at the entrance proclaimed “Public Space”.) Rebecca Hart provided plaintive chords and deft lyrics in the musical interludes. An actress came up to be interviewed, but instead took up a copy of *Ulysses* on the table and read at random, but elegantly, from it. Spontaneity often works out just plain sloppy, but this had a freshness, an energy and an honesty about it that was difficult to resist. With more time, or a more-ingrained habit of talk-show theatre-going, the audience would have engaged more actively. It was the kind of evening to provoke talk, or chat. And then Pat Liddy delivered the coup de grâce. Leading us out the rear of the theatre, into the lane at the side of the Olympia, in a trickling rain (they’d borrowed umbrellas as well, and handed them out), he took us through Temple Bar, through a gate for which he’d the key, to a private courtyard. This was the site of the first performance ever of Handel’s *Messiah*, in 1742, he said, as we stood beneath apartment windows in the rain. The umbrella holders pushed forward to make a makeshift auditorium, and Rebecca Hart took out her guitar and sang. It was simple, novel and a little bit special. Valk calls his work “social choreography”. Call it what you want; bringing people together, entertaining them, making them think, making them talk. It’s been done before, but it’s good to be reminded how easily it can be done again — and in a theatre, not just a TV studio.





# noel charlton gregory bateson and the dance of life

T. S. Eliot, in the first poem of his *Four Quartets*, writes of “the still point of the turning world”. There, where “past and future are gathered” is “the dance”! There, in that still centre (which in the fourth quartet he calls “the intersection of the timeless moment”) which is neither “flesh nor fleshless”, neither “from” nor “towards” and which we must not call “fixity”, resides the very possibility of the dancing. Without it there could be no dance — “and there is only the dance.”

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*What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always the present.*

When we look at the “present” that, with all our fellow humans, we have constructed it is clear that the seething surface life of the turning planet is the dance that now most urgently concerns us. The effects our human actions are having on the interweaving pattern of that dance are what is vital and crucial to us now. The steps of the living world are beginning to hesitate and falter. We humans are wildly out of step with the partners on whom we depend. We, the descendants of an unbroken line of survivors that stretches back to the first cellular life on Earth, have to re-learn the rhythms which have brought us safely through three billion years in company with all the other living beings without whom we cannot survive. In our present ecological extremity, we are threatened with global over-heating, probable desertification of more than half the planet, consequent starvation and mass migration of billions of people to the remaining habitable regions, the risk of wars over water and food supplies, energy shortages and the consequent development of dangerous substitute technologies. We have to re-learn our roles as *members* of the living community of Earth, our utter interdependence with and on all the living organisms with whom we share this planetary island of life. We must relearn the art of dancing our existence *within* the music of life — and we must do this very soon. This is no rehearsal. This is the rise of the curtain on what is quite possibly the last performance of *Homo sapiens* in the theatre of Earth.

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE



Can we do this? Is it possible? How can we re-learn the skills of true *participation* in the dance of life? I have spent much of the last ten years studying the wisdom of one thinker who has, so far, been too little heard. This man is Gregory Bateson and his thinking is vital to us now. We need to understand his unique interpretation of the nature of “minds” — throughout the living world. We need his vision of the interconnected living systems of which we are all co-dependant members. And we need to take his advice: that only by engaging with the beauty of the world by immersing ourselves in “nature” and in the many forms of human art can we regain access to our inherited (but now hidden) wisdom, gained through millions of years of evolution, about living successfully with our fellow species on Earth.

Gregory Bateson was born in 1904 into an academic family in Cambridge, England. His father was the famous biologist William Bateson, the first professor of Genetics in the world and a key developer of that discipline. Gregory’s childhood and adolescence was shadowed by his father’s dominance and wish for a worthy scientific successor — exacerbated by the tragic deaths of both his older brothers. Having read zoology, gaining a “first” at the university college which had educated his father and grandfather, Gregory seized the opportunity offered by a family friend to step aside from William Bateson’s shadow and enter the field of anthropology.

There followed years spent studying the social systems of native peoples in New Guinea (see his first book *Naven*) where he met American anthropologist Margaret Mead. They fell in love, married and together undertook innovative anthropological work with tribal peoples in Bali before returning to New Guinea shortly before the start of the 1939–45 war. Margaret, pregnant, returned to America, soon followed by Gregory. During the war they worked together for the U. S. government on ways of maintaining national morale, Bateson sought ways of helping American troops to understand the British people, analysed Nazi propaganda films and later worked on propaganda with forces in the far east. All this essentially psychological work proved valuable to him when he became, post-war, the leader of a team of researchers in a Californian mental hospital. By this time (after an affair with a New York dancer and his divorce from Margaret Mead) he had become profoundly opposed to nuclear weapons and the developing arms race with Russia. He had also become fascinated by, and influential within, the early Cybernetics movement which had originated from analysis of the control systems in German “flying bombs”. Bateson became a key thinker in this field — which grew into “Systems Theory” and has been important in the development of systemic thinking, a tool essential for developing ecological understanding of living systems.

After many years in psychological research and playing a key part in the development of the (still respected) Double Bind Theory of Schizophrenia, Bateson moved into the field of animal communication, studying the interactions of otters, wolves, octopuses and dolphins. From this he developed a more general concern for the environmental threats that were becoming evident in the later 1960s, organised some widely influential multi-disciplinary conferences on environmental issues, published *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, a collection of many of his previous papers and lectures and, in his final years, suffering from lung cancer, wrote his important book *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* and made substantial progress with *Angels Fear: An Investigation into the Nature and Meaning of the Sacred* before dying in 1980. This important book was completed from his drafts and notes by his daughter Mary Catherine Bateson.

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To approach the key points in Bateson's thinking, the first thing we need to understand is his unique conception of what "minds" are. This is difficult to accept at first sight because we are all conditioned to think of minds primarily in relation to human beings, to physical brains and to "consciousness". For Bateson, "minds" *do not have to be conscious or self-conscious* and they are not limited to organisms. His final understanding was that *any living system* (a microbe, a spider, a plant, mammal, fish, forest, ecosystem, society, political system — and so on) *which receives information* (defined as "news" of "any difference which makes a difference" to the "mind" concerned) *and then responds or acts appropriately* — is a mind. Perception (in the widest sense) of "difference" and appropriate response is all that is required. A tree, responding to colder weather by shedding its leaves, a forest ecosystem responding to climate change by favouring heat tolerant species over those which flourish in a colder environment, a government changing its policies following an opinion survey of its electorate's desires, a deer (in receipt of the information: "that lion is coming closer") running away, a family (human or other) gaining a new sense of mutual trust, a whole population changing its ways of living because it has become aware of the dangers of generating atmospheric carbon pollution — all these are examples of Batesonian "minds" in action. Each is exhibiting the mental process which Bateson sees as strictly comparable to *thought*. For him, *the systems are thinking*.

Secondly, we must understand the religious or spiritual implications of Bateson's thought. His final years saw the emergence, for this self-labelled "fourth generation atheist", of an understanding that the total, interconnected living system of the world must be regarded as "the sacred". Giving the annual Korzybski Memorial lecture in 1970, Bateson said:



*The individual mind . . . is immanent . . . also in the pathways and messages outside the body; and there is a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a sub-system. This larger mind is comparable to God and is perhaps what some people mean by “God” but it is still immanent in the total interconnected social system and planetary ecology . . . A certain humility becomes appropriate, tempered by the dignity and joy of being part of something much bigger. A part — if you will — of God.*

Bateson, 1973: 467–8

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He came to see the whole of life as worthy of respect, reverence and awe. Hence, the customary divisions in our thought between the religious and the secular, between “man” and “nature”, simply disappear. They become meaningless. The *whole* of the living world, the *entirety* of “creation” as we commonly call it, must become the focus of our love and care.

Lastly, we must understand Bateson’s “recommendation” for our survival on this planet. To relearn the ability to live sustainably we must, firstly, re-engage with the beauty of “nature” by spending time in the woods, by the ocean, with other animals or just lying in the grass — and we must do this with *awareness*. Secondly, we must engage in the *practice of art* — in any of its forms: painting, sculpture, poetry, metaphor, dancing, theatre, music making, literature, gardening. Bateson believes that such engagement will re-enable our access to the wisdom that we gained through millions of years of sustainable evolution — when we lived in harmony with our brothers and sisters in the systems of the “more-than-human world”. (Abram, 1997) He believes that, in recent millennia, our human minds have become focussed exclusively on our *conscious* mental processes. We base all our decision making and, hence, our actions on “self conscious purposefulness”. We go straight for what we want: “. . . dinner, a Beethoven sonata, sex. Above all it may be money or power . . .”<sup>1</sup>) without understanding the effects that our purposefulness has on other people and the wider world on which we depend.

Bateson saw that, whatever scale or size of living process we choose to think about, the process will itself be dependant on other and larger processes with which it must interact and on which it depends for food, energy, water, shade, warmth, air . . . — the list is endless. Similarly, any process we think about will contain smaller elements that are themselves systems on which the process must rely. Think of the complex chemical and bacterial systems that exist inside each one of us to enable digestion and nutrition. When we understand this “nesting” of *all* living systems within others, we can see that distinguishing between *any* processes is an arbitrary act. Hence, from a micro-bacterium



in the soil to the total living system of life on the planet, there is a continuous and inclusive *unity* of being. And more — given that earthly life is dependant on the presence of carbon — which was itself generated in deep space by the heat-death of second-generation stars many billions of years ago — we can see that all of life is *one* enormous dance of possibilities. Distinguishing between processes is useful for understanding the complexity but we must remember that any boundaries postulated are arbitrarily imposed for our own limited purposes. Truly, each dancer *is* the dance — and there is only one dance. Your name and my name is “Universe”.

There are more recent thinkers who support Bateson’s understanding. Scientist James Lovelock’s *Gaia Theory* postulates the entire living surface of Earth as behaving like a single organism. “Life”, he claims, has since its beginning (in spite of continuously increasing heat from the sun) regulated the temperature of the planet, maintaining conditions suitable for the continuance of living organisms. He sees the current increase in the blooming of certain ocean algae as a Gaian response to the present threat of climate change. These blooms release a gas which enables the forming of layers of heat-reflecting cloud over the earth.<sup>2)</sup> Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess’s *Deep Ecology* suggests a similar unity within all living systems and beings and derives from this an understanding of wide responsibility that is similar to Bateson’s own. Systems theorist, environmental teacher and campaigner Joanna Macy holds Bateson’s work in deep respect and all her books are supportive of the attitudes of inclusion and inter-dependence that he proposes. Biologist Stefan Harding has recently published a wonderfully accessible book which draws together all these themes.<sup>3)</sup>

The urgency of our own planetary situation is becoming more evident as I write. An increasing awareness and acceptance of the critical nature of the global warming threat is developing but we have far to go in making the deeply rooted shifts in our consciousness and ways of living that are needed. So how can we make these dramatic changes in our thinking and our attitudes?

Bateson’s key “recommendation” is that we must wholeheartedly engage in the dance of the living world. We can extend our “self” to *be* the dance — to *be* the dancing! To return to T. S. Eliot once more: we “are the music while the music lasts”.<sup>4)</sup> We must dance within the living community of the universe!

Bateson and I propose that we shall *choose* to live again *within* nature, discard our understanding of humanity as separate or superior, become *members* of the world once more, accept that all the lives within this membership are worthy of reverence and awe — and

rejoice, exult, in interaction with our fellow humans and our cousins in the wider world. Rejoicing, we will learn again the humility and the joy of belonging.

If you, reader, can see frameworks for *practical* action — leading toward these so badly needed changes — we want to know! This book can act. It can act as a catalyst for the new (or possibly very old) ways of living that are most urgently needed in our world today.

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- 3) (see the recommended reading list below for works by Harding, S., Naess, A. and Macy, J.)
- 4) Eliot, T. S., *Four Quartets: The Dry Salvages*.

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## CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# alan n. shapiro dear grace (patterns are everywhere remix)

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This is the author's take of an early version of Klien, Gormly and Valk's text for *Frame-makers — Book of Recommendations*, which was in process parallel to this publication.

## EDITORIAL NOTE

Michael Klien, being a non-native speaker of English, asked Alan N. Shapiro for editorial help with his text on patterns. The outcome of Alan's work was a remixed text revolving around the same dream. One could say: a social dream. This essay reflects Alan's experience at *Frame-makers — Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change* in May/June 2005. After attending the conference, he engaged seriously with Gregory Bateson/cybernetic epistemology/patterns ideas, and this text is a result of that engagement.

Patterns are everywhere, anywhere, and nowhere. Patterns are in between, ephemeral yet real. They exist in parallel to what we commonly call reality. We can only perceive them if we are precisely tuned in to their wavelength. They only become visible to us under certain specific conditions. But these absently present patterns govern our lives. Work routines, planetary systems, ordinary life, and daily conversations are all governed by the subtle framing of patterns. As the scientist-philosopher Gregory Bateson reminds us, it is the supremacy of patterns “that connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose, and all of them to me and me to you”. What Bateson foresaw in his seminal work was the initiation of a shared collective project of friends to imagine and bring about through social choreography a vivid awareness of the profound structures and dynamics that underlie the true realities of nature and human existence. Patterns are flexible and ambivalent. They are fluid constellations, continuously appearing and disappearing, crystallizing and dissolving, being born and dying. They are an ongoing dance of creation and de-creation in our environmental habitat and our species-being. They provide an elegant frame to guide our becoming airborne and our flight. Surrounding this dance is a world full of interactions, arrangements, relationships, instantiations, dependencies, and ecologies. To enquire into this world of ever-changing patterns and spirited forces at play is to explore the choreography of life, to interrogate what it is that makes us dance and why. Patterns can grow, learn, evolve, become livelier, and propagate. In a media-theatrical context, we might identify these patterns as an idea light

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bulb, the prop of a beer mug, an animated character, a cartoon speech bubble, or the volleyball named Wilson with which Tom Hanks converses while stranded on his Desert Island in Steven Spielberg's film *Castaway*. Yet such patterns are merely discrete systemic terms conceptually capturing only one level of analysis and approximation. The beer mug, Wilson, and the electric incandescent brainchild are also moveable components of other patterns, or macro patterns of patterns. We ourselves are constituents of larger social-psychological choreographies. Our acts are often unaware interventions in these wider dramaturgies. What is really required to act more effectively is an original creativity embedded in a sense of material historical processes and ethical responsibilities. What is needed is a thoroughgoing yet simple rational investigation into the general grammar of patterns, and into their twists and paradoxes, in order to discover the frames that bind us together and which render possible the jigs that we dance. With advancing knowledge in the arts and critical social sciences arise doubts, making plain the obsolescence of static frameworks, questioning the validity and exposing the limitations of existing frames as woefully inadequate for achieving the goal of "wider knowing". There must be an active rebuilding and re-framing of subjectivity. We must fundamentally transform the ways that we conduct our lives, interact, love, consume and relate to the social, libidinal, and territorial spheres. We have acquired the super-powers to bring about fantastic changes. This is a given of our radical rewiring of our rich cultural heritage. We will create conducive and conductive conditions to make things happen, for local-global patterning and re-patterning. This is the work of the choreographer of everyday life. She is the negotiator, navigator, provider and architect of the flowing economy in which we are swimming. "Western morality says: the good is the true, the true is the real, and the real is substantial. The Nietzschean child replies: your truth doesn't interest me, I know nothing of substance, and I am stumped by what you call reality." (Caroline Heinrich, *In Search of the "Child's Innocence"*) I, the untimely timeless Nietzschean child-choreographer for whom sequential-chronological "stages of life" have no meaning, whose Self evanesces into the Unity of the Whole, am not interested in the least in your Business-as-Usual notions of pre-scripted choreography, those configurations of fixed relations that belong to the classical Euclidean geometric world of rock solid distinctions. My playful Klein-bottle topographical choreography is not about the disciplinary arrangement of inanimate objects, nor is it about determining the fate of human beings within the four-dimensionality of classified space-time as we have known it until now. Such traditional dance-work is as far removed from patterns of truthful creation as it possibly could be. This conventional stuff is rather engineered for instant digestion





and assimilation. There is no challenge and nothing at stake in designing for the affirmation and reproduction of the established order of things. I shout an emphatic “no” to the imperative to choreograph the becoming-concrete of social institutions. The hardening foundations of the dominant social are poured during the sleep-walk of our multitudes of reductionist thinkers, who bury fruitful uncertainty and complexity beneath the mass-produced grave markers of their false assumptions. The physical universe as I know it is a thirteen-dimensional hyper-space of contingency and free-floating forces. I conduct the orchestra of phantom fragments of naked time, eating my naked lunch as I herd endless news safely back into the makeshift shelters of my spitfire ideas and actions, an endless cycle of fusional patterning and releasing outwards to chaos. These protecting containers are temporarily erected, transformed, and then actively forgotten. They might resurface or be rediscovered at a later date-and-time-stamp, when the white hole end of the tunnel into which they entered via the black hole finally re-hits the fanned open air of space. The choreographed collapsing and spiraling of the fall from grace into the heart of darkness is the prequel to metamorphosis into the posthuman. Like dust from the feet of the traveler at the end of his journey, it is from the dug out dirty ground of being that super-charged anti-matter is brought back to terrestrial contact. Life blossoms. Vitality is realized in its full potentiality and capacity. The true stability of this pataphysical architecture embraces ebbs and flows, and flirts with infinity. As systems architect of the invisible buzzings of the emergence of consciousness, I set entities into relationship to one another. Sometimes this is no more than the re-shuffling of the deck of a game-of-life context. I introduce enough “re-framing” into the situation for the idea-body to get unstuck from its orbital patterns of circumstance and repetition. Last night in bitter-sweet nocturnal reverie, I took part in a massive demonstration against humanity. Those gathered together protested against the insanity, contradictions and cognitive failures within individuals and society as a whole. I was among a throng of tens of thousands of dutifully assembled lost souls, each holding a candle in her hands. The sense of absolute urgency was highlighted by a deathly silence that ruled because no one had any ideas or vision whatsoever. No one knew what to say or do. Finally, for no apparent reason, a few scattered individuals raised their candles ever so slightly, perhaps adjusting angle to compensate for a change in wind direction or velocity. Soon everyone else followed. “Look”, I whispered to my shadow, you who are my faithful and constant companion, “We are finally doing something! The movement has re-started! Soon we’ll be wearing war paint on our cheeks and the Metropolitan Indians will be turned loose on the City once again!” What are the precise actions to be taken to bring about the freeing of such





a spirit, you ask? Naturally, expressed in the languages of our existing sense-apparatuses, nothing is precisely that thing that you do and which needs to be done. All acts are reductionist except for the act of doing nothing, once we have arrived in the trans-computational no man's land of unfathomable complexity. All answers are immanent to the self-aware object's continuously unfolding life as it decrypts its invisible species-nascent code saved on no storage medium in real time. Everything traces and scents the trail of a similarity of patterns in the interlinking sphere of the living. After appearance and growth comes finally death. This can be transformed into no-death if we decide with every ounce of our self-confident conviction and self-taught technological savvy to say no to that expiration date. Sharpen your awareness of the communicative procedures of the internal skin, said the sage to the seeker. My secret epidermis, which no violator can take away from me, is delineated by the outside of the inside, which is beneath the inside of the outside. If we slowly climb the Stairway to Heaven, each single step up the Master is no effort.

But sometimes I wonder if meaningful creation is possible at all. What forms of vibrating reverberant purpose has the rationalist-linear-algorithmic way of human inventiveness that has straitjacketed us up until this day succeeded in giving rise to? Sure, we have devised creature comforts of all sorts. But has not our restricted way of imagineering led to a systematically self-inflicted segregation from more profound and wider realities? Enthusiastically it seems, we have been wildly running around in circles, as we build roads, castles, nation-states and simulated-democracy constitutions. Is this the meaningful habitat of the extraordinarily re-ordinary that we have built for ourselves to live in? Standing transfixed in historical presence, bound hands and feet to the hyper-realism of our mundane gravitationally down-pulling creations, we catch a glimpse of real value only betwixt and between the fake values of commercial-consumerist shopkeeper-mentality mongering. Nothing is rising. Nothing is rising. No candle is yet being raised. Only the dropouts and the lumpens are producing any genuine wealth. I lament the poverty of the oh so restricted endeavours of our intellectuals, academics, politicians, and cultural impresarios. They advance such a reduced sampling of the wide spectrum of nature's and capitalist society's possibilities. A crude, simplistic, reductionist reading of nature and culture's ways and byways, her thousands of authentic paths mapped witlessly upon the surface of our minds. Imprints relentlessly under-computed and partial-recalled in parimutual permutations within the hyper-planned architectures of our pre-programmed daily existences. A mistletoed misfortune, when our castles in the air are





brought down crashingly to earth by the grave and heavy spirits of simulation and mechanical modelling. All this, at the degree zero point in our history, when the dance of elementary particles is to be the new name given to the earth for the emanation of life from eternal starkness. As staid hierarchies prevail in the logical positivist conscious classification systems of humans and the narrow cause-and-effect thinking that reigns in contemporary medicine, sex, and urban planning, it becomes more and more self-evident that the machinic mind and the limits of imagination are the products of the limits of our perceptions of the world within the prevailing techno-scientific paradigm. Whatever the patterns are that one perceives become the available palette for building in a combinatorial way from the smallest possible units of the system to the desired executable piece of pseudo-intelligence. This method will always be a reduction, and our reductions no longer work. What we perceive with optical recognition based on one-dimensional simplifications will always produce conflict with the a priori environment that becomes our too rigidly constructed habitat. We have enslaved our imaginations, limited the world of our minds to a precooked repertoire of frozen instances. Imagination draws from perception and this spells the outlined boundary of our doom. Never limited by imagination, only by perception. Our societies serve well as reminders of the monstrosity of our collective limitations. Good nations and beautiful institutions are hardly choreographed from the blueprint of written laws. Such nations of anarchism would never be lawless or loveless, as the bearers of the books of the currently prevailing false community of false nations try to get us to believe. The laws of these new anarcho-Marxist nations of liberated capitalism, these lands of Peter Pan Make-Believe, will be inscribed into, and emerge out of, distributed self-ordering automata of free associations. Individuals will balance their libidinal and literal checkbooks with rules, not with laws proscribing order for a collective. What a difference! Nations full of proportionalities, rich in relations, giving the individual her space to unfold in full thought. Thought which is the highest form of action or the most significant moral choice for determining the future of the world. Yes, it's time to start playing for real. Games and play instead of using the body and pain of others for our violence-sports and simulacrum-wars. But we have to take our time. The time to observe and to study the glue that has been holding all hives — whether rigid, aggressive or indifferent — together. Such post-possessive properties have been on my mind for some time. I see them as the future social glue. What a balance to be struck! Maintaining a hive, a swarm whilst catering to the individual. Maximum individual freedom coupled with maximum harmonic stability of the collective — this is the Holy Grail to which the Yellow Brick Road of social choreogra-



phy leads. I feel deeply that the alchemic secret opening the way to this Alice's Wonderland resides in the idea of "recursive epistemology". (see Peter Harries-Jones' work on Bateson) The literary sociology of knowledge of how we as individuals, and we as a social grouping of companions-companeros, go about knowing. How do we know our own framing procedures, our reoccurrences, and even our mistakes. The word recursivity, the deep interdependencies of everything with everything else. The dimension of self-recursivity, or that required existential and personal component of all legitimate thoughts and assertions, which must be grounded in one's own experiences and struggles, and not remain on the arrogant self-satisfied level of intellectual abstractions. I cannot explain in a single speech what recursivity is, and I shall instead give it the prodigious gift of having super-alchemistic powers for now. The genie in the bottle, discovered on the deserted South Pacific Island after the splashdown of the Mercury capsule protecting the spiritually seeking astronaut-of-the-inner-mind's journey. What a merged amalgamated mind we live in! A world of endlessly integrated smaller minds. To describe reality in terms of things and subjects — as if everything is not subject to a larger flow — is a violation of our senses. Let us re-introduce movement and the concepts of dance and re-mixing into our language. Language has a dismal past, let us give it a better future! I could talk about the nuts, wheels, bolts and springs that by themselves move nothing. But together, if organized in the right arrangement, they actually produce a clock or a carriage. Such fixed models only help to confirm one's illusions of a mechanistic, dualistic reality of Aristotelian binary oppositions. There are better clocks out there that not one single mind had yet put into order. Evolution is the dance of many minds. Systems are an interlocking movement-sequence of a number of parts. The elements of manifold systems dance and interweave with other ingredients according to the rhythm of immanent patterns. Systems fuse, morph, retain information, memorize, learn and find ways to duplicate themselves, notably in the form of a chemical double helix string of exons and introns, which in another disco Saturday Night Fever swing is wrapped around everything that its dance touches. It plays with itself, plays itself out, and gets played out within its two-sided-that-is-just-one-side wormhole-like Möbius context. It copies itself forward in time with difference and deferring. Such Minds, conscious or not, are everywhere. Each atom affected or involved in the dance of life is part of many minds. Every mind is arising through others, built upon and within an immeasurable quantity of minds. And here we are on our illusionary Island, an isolated abstract thinking mind we call consciousness, pretending not to be engaged in such a social dance of reciprocal entanglements. Welcome to the Rock. The dance of life does



not take place in isolation. All of these minds form an interwoven conglomerate of subtle balances, a stability in constant movement. Every innocent child at play knows that a simple disturbance of one constellation sends ripples throughout the connected fabric, ripples in space-time. Our limited cogitating consciousness can only be passive in the bad way, bound mercilessly into the fabric while the effects ripple through us, changing or killing us. We must take care not to cause the ripples ourselves. All minds that bind the living together recursively validate and define themselves. Yes, recursively. One's context defines who one is since we are all part of each other's context, and so is the oak outside, the field beneath our feet and the worms below. We make each other possible, enable each other's elasticity and life. This could be an elegant description of recursivity. Our minds simply exist through and in others. My assumption is that the dead are also part of this fabric, as a tree needs to be dead at its core to sustain a fragile skin of life around what is non-living. This could serve as a metaphor, binding the living and the dead into an ecology of belonging. I can no longer see with my eyes in literal hyper-real pictures, representations of unique moments. Patterns are everywhere, anywhere, and nowhere. They are real. In between, ephemeral yet real. That's why I refer to choreography as the invisible art, the art of the invisible. After all — it is immanent in relations, force-fields, and attractors of all sorts — not frozen into any subject or object. Choreography is everywhere, always, in everything. I can no longer see in literal hyper-real pictures. I see in movement and interrelations, in exchange and interchange between bodies and ideas. What is the difference between the concepts of body and idea? Isn't an idea a body — when passed on in its entirety? Isn't a body an idea that has been strong enough to prevail long enough to be perceived, physical if described in matter? What rule-based choreography is immanent in the playing out of chemical processes of becoming-life? And what choreographs the act of making love? Can there be a more aesthetic dance that extends the mind, wrapping one mind-body around the other, bringing the other to life in your hand, your hand. Choreography of evolution, an evolution beyond the dichotomy of necessity and freely chosen, intricate order of two people in relation to each other, the ether of the mental fabrics being pulled into a dance not inscribed anywhere — a conglomerate of needs, desires, submission, sacrifice, humility, giving, tenderness, energy, vitality — an immanent, nameless set of relations within nature, an authorless phenomenon usually bastardized and instantly destroyed by one's will to make order. What frames all this movement, these processes, mating dances, ant colonies. The subtle pathways, attractors, fields. The pulling of movement out of mannerisms and minds into time and space? These choreographies surpass the capacity of





any choreographer, any one creator. Yet ignorance still prevails when we flatter ourselves with our pathetic, over-simplified creations, our rote copies of nature, our factories, transport vehicles, and theatres that never learned to dance at all. We stand proudly fake-erect next to our daft work that in truth belittles our very source of knowledge as we force our self-referential, awkward creations onto the suffering larger ecology. To live harmoniously within an ecological system, one must indeed strive to perceive the deep structural processes underpinning one's environment. One must harvest, integrate and digest them, make them part of one's mental performances, and furthermore apply them as structural tools in one's personal creations. Only in this way can they become integral parts of a larger ecology. To embed my consciousness free of collisions within my larger mind, and myself within the social, and with your mind, and with the social mind within the larger ecology of life and nature rests at the core of human desires and survival.

It all sounds like utopia, especially to the ears of the radically detached, self-righteous world of bankers, artists, cooks, and thieves. In fact, it is a utopia far more realistic than their time-worn realism. I have spoken of the need to gather the village around the fire, to build bridges to the sacred, to the unknown, via dance, acknowledging our limits as a collective. I don't know if you are familiar with the story of the polar bear who was kept in a too small cage. Once released into a bigger enclosure, he kept moving in the same patterns to which he was accustomed. He moved constantly from left to right and back, emulating the container he used to be kept in. This bear is you. Stuck in patterns shaped since birth — and most likely your roaming space has decreased over time ever since — your enframing walls still rise and dull your mind. I presume that our primary path or instinct in life is to think oneself enclosed. Yet consciousness has given you and me the possibility to gain glimpses of our condition beyond this. It is up to us to put a stop to habitual movements formed by antiquated frames, to align our being with the ecology of mind and to start creating anew on the basis of such knowledge and freedom. One needs to dance to inscribe into oneself the possibility of such real change and growth. Turning water into words of wine and thoughts into choreography, I ask you, dear shadow-brother, what patterns does it takes to extricate ourselves from the condition of the military soldier in Big Rat's Army that we have reduced ourselves to? My recommendations will resonate and shine only in the light of the elevated candles. Illumination from a different angle, from a new naïve pragmatic reality of the senses. Choreography will be the word given to “recursive epistemology” that indicates the essential



intrinsic value of aesthetics to any form of being. It shall invoke a sensuous inclusion of the observer him/herself in such reality. A way of seeing the world, choreography makes reality much richer. It infuses into one's reality the chemical ingredients for perceiving a new dimension. This new dimension of relations, proportionalities, movement, and dance makes us at once actors and creators in our newfound land, restoring unity where there was finally only separation. Naïve realism or radical pragmatism emerges as a new paradigm. Sensitive knowing coupled with a deep subjective observation of nature, society and oneself. A painstakingly precise sensorial imagination. Current social frames and the tautological self-fulfilling prophecies of rationalism stand as grey architectures. In a world and ecology of minds, the state of dance and hop is essential and elemental. Dance is a display of the life-force. Don't think Pirouettes. Think of bird flight, bird shit, and clouds. Dance is an ephemeral state of the qualities and properties of relations. It is all open to change. A potential for change, a flexible and non-determined condition. A specific, excited state of mind where all things are possible. Until now the way our society has choreographed dance has unfortunately been reflective of the larger propensities of how we deal with the unknown, the unframeable, the foreign, the spiritual, and the animal. Conventional arrangements — those of streets, languages, railways, and tin-soldier performers — impose rigid frames. These systems are the embodiment of fear and the cultural suppression of that which is to be governed neither by individual nor collective will. Our premise will not be to constrain movement into a set pattern, but rather to provide a cradle for movement to find its own patterns — over and over again. To prevent a body, whether bound by skin or habits, from degenerating into stagnation. To enable lightness and primal energy that are only discovered once relations start dancing. Dance immerses humanity into interconnected divided moments of mind, into the stirring dynamical systems that connect the dots of the world and our being in time. The world needs dancers. Return stolen territory to the immortal one who dances. To sweat, to smell, to think and stink in flesh, to be in presence in proxy for others who are absent or have disappeared. It is time to stop choreographing Swan Lakes and train schedules! In your quest for innovation you innovate nothing. When the curtain falls on your Swan Lake, the walls between your tribe and other tribes will be thicker and stronger, and all candles will have melted down to their wicks. You are pattern and thought, none of which you have thought yourself. Better to instead assume responsibility for your being in its totality. The future is to be created. Make a dance that tears down separating walls and unties knots. Your choreographies build our meaning and your creations, dear brother, matter to me. Take time to sense your context. It charts the boundaries of



DEAR GRACE (PATTERNS ARE EVERYWHERE REMIX)

your imagination. Make a choreography of the clearing. Out of the woods and onto the beach. Only fools go marching on — the wise ones dance.

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CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE





# lawren bale

## remembering gregory . . .

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But epistemology is always and inevitably personal.

The point of the probe is always  
in the heart of the explorer:

What is *my* answer to the question  
of the nature of knowing?

I surrender to the belief  
that my knowing is but a small part  
of a wider integrated knowing  
that knits the entire  
biosphere  
or creation.

So the conch shell carries  
the snail's prochronism  
— its record of how,  
in its own past,  
it successively solved  
a formal problem  
in pattern formation.

Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature:*  
A Necessary Unity

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# biographies

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**MILTON AYLOR**, born 1938, USA, lived in Germany since 1975 in Frankfurt am Main, a retired Presbyterian Minister, works now as theology teacher. Interested in experimental theology and philosophy of religion.  
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Born and raised in rural California, **LAWREN BALE** lives in Narberth, Pennsylvania with his wife Martina and their six year old daughter. Bale's poetry reflects his wide flung travels and his formal studies of religion, culture and epistemology. Before settling down in the Delaware Valley, Bale worked and studied in Honolulu, Hawaii, Bangkok, Thailand, Kyoto, Japan and Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

**BASTA! YOUTH COLLECTIVE** was active in Dublin and North Wicklow for two years from 2004 to 2006. While the collective has now disbanded a lot of the members are still actively involved in various DIY projects such as the Sambo Project in Bray and a film currently being made with the help of the Project Arts Centre about the role of DIY ethics and ideas in society which will be completed early 2008.

**DANIEL BLAEUER** is a PhD candidate at the University of South Florida in the Department of Communication. Blaeuer's research interests include exploring the usefulness of cybernetics and performance theory for modern ecological thought and ecological movements. Blaeuer is currently exploring these ideas and connections in research on public performances at science museums. Blaeuer is always looking for more people to talk these ideas up with.  
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**NOEL CHARLTON** has a varied life-time experience in industry and commerce, teaching, self-sufficiency small-holding, environmental activism, rural sociology, therapeutic community work and academic study of ecological philosophy with the Schumacher College, Devon and the Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy, University of Lancaster. Charlton has developed a specialism in the work of Gregory Bateson. His book, to be published in May 2008 by the State University of New York Press is entitled *Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty and the Sacred Earth*.  
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Philosopher **MARY FOX** has two BA degrees, in Design Products from the Limerick College of Art and Design, 1985 and English Literature and Philosophy, 2004. Awards include a V.E.C. Scholarship, 1982–1985 and Mary Immaculate College Studentship, 2004–present.

**JEFFREY GORMLY** is a writer working in Applied Science Fiction, Social Choreography, and new theatrical formats. He is an associate artist with Daghda Dance Company and has worked with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, Abbey Theatre, Dublin and nervousystem. In another life, as Perspectivkid, he is creative director of Soul Gun Warriors. He is currently editing *choreograph.net*, online home of *Framemakers* thinking.  
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**PETER HARRIES-JONES** was born in Oxford, England. He attended schools and universities in the U. S., South Africa, and Oxford, England, where he obtained his doctorate. As a specialist in the field of anthropology and African Studies, he taught extensively and founded the African Studies Programme at the York University, Ontario, Canada. Stemming from research in urban Africa, he developed an interest in communication studies, systems theory and ecology. *A Recursive Vision: Ecological Understanding and Gregory Bateson* was nominated as the best social science book in Canada, 1995. He is currently engaged in a new science, Biosemiotics, following and expanding Bateson's ideas.  
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CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE



**NOELEN HARTIGAN** is the Programmes Director of Amnesty International Irish Section and formerly Campaigns Manager with the Simon Communities of Ireland. She writes in a personal capacity.

**DYLAN HASKINS** (20) has been involved in various Do-It-Yourself projects for the past five years. A founding member of the Basta! Youth Collective in 2004, he now plays in a punk band called Frigits, writes a zine called *Rent This Space*, runs a small record label called Hide Away Records and organises all ages gigs for touring and local bands in his house in Dublin. He is a Visual Communication student in IADT.

**CAROLINE HEINRICH** was born in 1972 in Bühl/Baden, Germany. She studied philosophy and lives in Mainz. She is a leading expert in Nietzsche, Benjamin, Kafka, Baudrillard and Holocaust Studies. She is the author of two books, including *Grundris zu einer Philosophie der Opfer der Geschichte (Philosophy of History from the Standpoint of the Victims)*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2004, which will soon be published in English translation by Avinus Press.

**GEORG IVANOVAS**, born in 1953 in Germany of Russian-German origin, is a medical doctor and psychotherapist. He has had his own medical practice since 1989, first in Bad Würzach, Germany and since 1993 in Heraklion, Crete, Greece. Special education in naturopathy (homeopathy and balneology) and psychotherapy (Gestalt and systemic psychotherapy). Since 1999 he is working on a PhD about systemic thinking in medicine (University of Crete), with several publications on the issue. Guest-editor of the journal *Kybernetes* (7/18 2007) for the Gregory Bateson memorial.

**MICHAEL KLIEN** studied choreography in Vienna, New York and London. In 1994 he co-founded the enigmatic London based performance collective Barriedale Operahouse (in operation until 2000) and has been Artistic Director of Daghdha Dance Company — Ireland's premiere dance organization — since 2003. He has worked as an acclaimed choreographer, curator and producer of numerous touring productions, installations and events. His works have been performed at venues across the world, including commissions from Ballet Frankfurt and the Volksoper Wien. Since 1998 he is concerned with the development of choreography as an aesthetics of change and is currently finishing his PhD at the Edinburgh School of Arts.

**W. GORDON LAWRENCE**, MA (Aberd), Dr.rer.oec (Bergische) is managing partner of Social Dreaming Ltd., London. He has regularly published for the past 40 years. His latest run has been four books on Social Dreaming (some translated into Italian and Hungarian). His career had been in the army, commerce and education before he became a social scientist at the Tavistock Institute, London. Since then he has consulted in many enterprises, but devotes much of his time now to developing the praxis of Social Dreaming in a wide range of countries, and consulting to consultants in organizations.

Doctor of arts in dance, choreographer **KIRSI MONNI** has worked widely in the field of dance in Finland over two decades. In her doctoral studies she explored thoroughly the ontological shifts in Western dance art during the 20th century. She is a founding member of Zodiak Centre for New Dance in Helsinki and is currently working in its artistic leadership. Among her awards are twice the State Prize for Dance Art and three times the five years artistic grant from the Ministry of Education.

Born in England and educated in Canada, **ROBIN PARMAR** now resides in Ireland. There he curates performance events, performs sound art, reads poetry, designs for visual media and programmes open source software. Recent credits include a lecture on *Baudrillard and Doctor Who*, a seven-hour concert for dance and several websites.

**ALAN N. SHAPIRO** is a software developer and cultural theorist. He is the author of *Star Trek: Technologies of Disappearance*, Berlin: Avinus Press, 2004, which has been acclaimed in many book reviews in prestigious academic journals as one of the most original works in the field of Science Fiction Studies, as well as being the foundational work of applied Baudrillardian sociology. Shapiro is working on the invention of Artificial Intelligence, the secret of which is that its conceptual-intellectual basis is to be found in the radical semiotics of Baudrillard and Derrida, and not in the limiting algorithmic-combinatorial paradigm of existing computer science.

**FREDERICK STEIER** is on the faculty of the Department of Communication at the University of South Florida. He is the editor of the recent volume *Gregory Bateson: Essays for an Ecology of Ideas*, Imprint Academic, 2005 and is currently enjoying being a scientist-in-residence at the Center for Learning at the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa, Florida, USA, where he is involved in participatory action research oriented studies of collaborative learning and play. He views publishing an article as an invitation to conversation. (email [fsteier@shell.cas.usf.edu](mailto:fsteier@shell.cas.usf.edu), [fsteier@gmail.com](mailto:fsteier@gmail.com))





Born in Italy in 1970, **DAVIDE TERLINGO** is an eclectic cultural manager and entrepreneur. He has lived and worked in several European countries, developing a large number of arts projects and cultural initiatives in a variety of contexts and roles, and growing a unique and complex perspective of the arts world, synthesising theory, practice, creativity and policy. In 2004 he joined Daghdha Dance Company where he founded and managed a progressive cultural programme which integrated public services, inter/national collaborations and visionary platforms such as Mamuska Limerick. In 2007 he founded the Mamuska Network, which he currently directs. In the same year he was also appointed Head of Dance at the Arts Council of Ireland. He holds an MA in Dance Performance from the University of Limerick and a Post Graduate in Business in Cultural Events Management from the IADT in Dun Laoghaire.

**STEVE VALK** is the Head Dramaturge of Daghdha Dance Company and the founder of R.I.C.E. the Radical Institute of Cybernetic Epistemology in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. For a period of twelve years he worked as Artistic Collaborator and Head Dramaturge for Ballett Frankfurt under the direction of William Forsythe and as Head Dramaturge of the TAT Theater in Frankfurt am Main. Through the landmark projects *Schmalclub* and *New Meaningful Public Space* his work was instrumental in establishing and defining the field and practice of Social Choreography. In theater and opera he has worked with directors Robert Wilson and Peter Konvitschny and with the German playwright Heiner Müller, in contemporary music with the world-renowned Ensemble Modern. He is a prize-winning graphic and visual artist and has published numerous books and essays. He is a graduate of Cornell University.

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*A recursive process is one in which objects are defined in terms of other objects of the same type. Using some sort of recurrence relation, the entire class of objects can then be built up from a few initial values and a small number of rules. Care, however, must be taken to avoid self-recursion, in which an object is defined in terms of itself, leading to an infinite nesting.*

Eric W. Weisstein, *Mathworld*

*Discard your memory, discard the future tense of your desire; forget them both. Both what you knew and what you want, to leave space for a new idea.*

W. Bion, *Bion in New York and São Paulo*

*If faced with the extreme situation affecting us all, and stimulated by the sick condition of the social organism, people together can follow through with the impulse to change things, it will be possible to develop an intuition of a healthy image of this social organism. And as their hearts warm to this social form that still needs to be created, the will of each individual becomes a part of a common and greater will, which may then possess the strength to create something new on the one hand, and on the other, to develop ever new insights into how this path towards a new reality might be travelled.*

Interview with Joseph Beuys, *What is Art?*, p. 108



