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On the State of Dance Philosophy

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Abstract

What are Eric Mullis's contributions to a pragmatist philosophy of dance? First, the work brings attention to aspects of dance in regional and religious contexts and to a selection of religious dance practices (Pentecostal and Quaker) not typically addressed in the literature of dance philosophy, thus adding to the current scope of dance studies. This book's main strength with respect to pragmatist philosophies is its efforts to apply existing theories of pragmatism (James and Dewey, with commentary on Shusterman's neopragmatist somaesthetics) to aspects of dance in a particular regional setting. This task is accomplished with three aspects of the research: ecological study of Pentecostal dance, pragmatism in a selection of its manifestations with connections to philosophies of dance, and performance. In the final chapter, the scope is broadened with summary references to alternative theories of dance philosophy and their interdisciplinary relations to dance studies using pragmatist philosophies. The remainder of this essay examines selection of past and current studies that inform the state of dance philosophy with the aim of gathering a broader perspective on the state of dance philosophy. While there is no established longterm tradition of dance philosophy, a generation of twentieth-century scholars—Cohen, Arnheim, Sparshott, Goodman, Van Camp, Banes,

Carroll, McFee, Foster, and Fraleigh, among others—has advanced recent philosophical discussion of dance. Joining these are contemporary writers on philosophy of dance, such as Anna Pakes.

PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHY AND DANCE: INTERDISCIPLINARY DANCE RESEARCH IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH, by Eric Mullis, Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 247 pp. €51.99.

Eric Mullis's *Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance: Interdisciplinary Dance Research in the American South* joins an ever-growing collection of interdisciplinary research into philosophy of dance of the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. Mullis's contribution differs from much of the writings on this topic in its philosophical focus on pragmatism and on dance in a particular regional culture of the southeastern United States. One of the aims of this study is to bring attention to forms of dance as it exists in a rural culture apart from mainstream art dance as it appears in New York and other major urban settings. Field observations pertaining to Pentecostal religious practices in a regional Southern culture and a performance, *Later Rain*, are key elements of the research in this volume. This work is published in the Performance Philosophy series of Palgrave Macmillan, which focuses on interdisciplinary creative practice and scholarship.

Mullis's examination of dance in religious contexts (Shaker and Pentecostal fundamentalism), together with performance experience as choreographer and dancer, provides a focus for his approach to the theoretical examination of dance with the aid of pragmatist philosophies. This task is accomplished within the framework of the three aspects of the research: ecological study of Quaker and Pentecostal dance; the pragmatism of William James, John Dewey, and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics, with their connections to philosophies of dance; and the author's own performance experience as choreographer and performer.

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Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1, "Sources beyond the Pale," introduces the sources offered in support of the research on which the book is based. Chapter 2, "Pragmatic Methods: Experimental Inquiry, Somaesthetics, and Performance Praxis," gives the author's understanding of pragmatism as it relates to his work in this volume. Chapter 3, "Religious History: Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh," examines the historic instances of ecstatic religious practices of Protestant groups in Western Europe and the Americas, including how Wesleyan Methodism, Shaker, and Pentecostal religious practices crossed racial lines and were adapted in the African American communities of the American South and elsewhere. Chapter 4, "Dance History: The Rolling Deep," examines the place of Quaker religious life in theater works by such choreographers as modern-dance choreographer Doris Humphrey (*The Shakers*, 1931) and the Wooster Group's *Early Shaker Spirituals*, which transformed the Shaker religious practice into theater performances. Chapter 5, "Ethnographic Research: Signs Follow Them That Believe," documents Mullis's visits to Pentecostal churches in southern Appalachia to research Pentecostal religious practices. Chapter 6, "Movement Research ...," describes the process of developing his own theater piece *Later Rain*, which is based on his observations during visits to Pentecostal churches in the southeastern United States. Chapter 7,

"Religious Experience: William James, Ecstasy, and Fundamentalism," connects James's views on religious experience found in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* to Pentecostal ecstasy and Mullis's *Later Rain*. Chapter 8, "On Pragmatic Performance Philosophy," reviews current theoretical methodologies of dance philosophy.

Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance, thus, offers a threefold interdisciplinary approach to dance research: pragmatist philosophy focused on James and Dewey, field research involving Pentecostal religion in a southeastern region of the United States, and dance performance. Pentecostal ecstatic religious experiences may involve appeals to spiritual engagements with the "Holy Ghost" and employ live snakes in ritual practices. Performance—that is, the author's account of his own engagement as choreographer and performer—is an integral element in the research leading to the creation of *Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance* (10, 149–57ff). Mullis brings to this study experience as choreographer, dance performer, and philosopher of dance.

The author understands both James and Dewey as "experimentalists" committed to the view that theory begins with experimental practice. James's account of religious experience is considered here in relation to Mullis's epistemological concerns with the ecstatic religious experiences he observes in Pentecostal churches that he visits during his research for this project. Mullis asserts that James's reflections on mystical consciousness as a function of a "transactional self" consisting of multiple subselves accommodate a range of experiences including mysticism and the religious ecstasies of Pentecostalism (185).

One difficulty with the application of James's views on mystical experiences to Pentecostal ecstasies, as the author acknowledges, is that the latter are communal in nature, whereas James focuses mainly on the mystical experiences of the individual. In any event, it seems clear, as the author states, that James would not have endorsed Pentecostal fundamentalism, with its presumption of divine gifts and commitments to binding soteriological and eschatological purposes (19).

Dewey is cited in *Pragmatic Philosophy and Dance* for his views on artmaking (49–53) and in regard to ethical theory (216). Perhaps a more extensive reference to Dewey's *Art as Experience*, where he explores multiple aspects of the experience of works of art, noting that a work of art involves the interaction of the structure of the artwork with the energies of the subject's experience, would have served better here. Apropos of Mullis's discussion of dance in a religious context, Dewey references the connection between dance and religious rites and celebrations in *Art as Experience*. References to dance appear in the 1934 edition of *Art As Experience*.¹

Dewey's main connections to dance emerge with respect to his influence in dance education as initiated through the writings and practice of Margaret H'Doubler and elsewhere in his philosophy of education. H'Doubler studied with Dewey at Columbia and subsequently developed a widely influential dance-education program at the University of Wisconsin.

One of the principal reasons for citing Dewey in support of Mullis's study here is the appeal to Dewey's empirical methodology. That being the case, it is necessary to inquire whether Mullis's use of *Later Rain* as a portion of his research methodology will satisfy requirements of Dewey's empirical methodology. This part of Mullis's research is based on self-reported first-hand experiences of the author as creator and participant in the performances of *Later Rain*. Mullis's aim here, to explore the

relation of a theater performance to an actual Pentecostal religious ecstasy, meets one of Dewey's requirements: a problem calling for a response. Missing, it would appear, is a second critical element of Dewey's empirical methodology: evaluation and testing the results by experience in order to address some beneficial outcome to addressing the problem. What might the means of testing called for in Dewey's empirical methodology be as employed by Mullis? Might it be changes in the audience's views on ecstatic performance, acceptance by the Pentecostal religious community, critical review, satisfaction of the performers, or assessment in the context of a wider arts and scholarly community with critical measures for assessing such research means?

Although pragmatist philosophers James and Dewey did not necessarily embrace autobiographical writings in their approaches to philosophical inquiry, Mullis employs autographical means focused on the creation and performance of his own theater piece. *Later Rain*, with a cast of four including the author as choreographer and performer, creates a theatrical work aimed at transforming Pentecostal ecstasy into artistic performance before a live audience. The text includes an account of the performers' experiences in performing *Later Rain*, including that of Mullis (154). In support of this venture, Mullis argues that contemporary pragmatists like Richard Rorty and Shusterman, among others, find crossing the boundaries of philosophical inquiry into ever-changing everyday life useful in exploring theoretical perspectives. The discussion then moves to pragmatic methodology, where alternative methodologies cited are recognized as theoretical tools available for the pragmatist researcher's use.

What, then, are Mullis's main contributions to dance philosophy in this work? The title, *Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance*, implies a work on the philosophy of dance. This aim is interestingly developed in part by references to a select group of pragmatist philosophers with the author's own contributions to pragmatist philosophy of dance and to numerous other philosophers cited throughout the text. The subtitle, *Interdisciplinary Dance Research in the American South*, implies a broader scope focused on ethnographic accounts of religious practices (Quaker and Pentecostal) and a narrative account of the author's experiences with examples of performance of his dance works. The author delivers on both and, accordingly, advances the scope of dance philosophy.

However, aspects of Mullis's approach to pragmatist dance philosophy invite questions pertaining to its research methodology. First, while the author has established credentials as a philosopher and independently as a choreographer-dance performer, his qualifications for ethnographic research are not indicated. Since much of the strength of the argument relies on the ethnographic account of the author's investigations into dance in the rituals of Quaker and Pentecostal religions, these aspects of the study welcome additional support. Similarly, the author's self-narrated account of personal and company members' experiences in performing *Later Rain* would be strengthened by providing additional examples to support his thesis. The weight given to performance in support of this book thus calls for a more-distanced account of the role of the performance and a wider scope of performance examples than the single example offered here. A larger issue for dance philosophy raised here is the need for clarification of the relation of dance philosophy and performance. Are these practices the same, interchangeable?

This book's main strength with respect to pragmatist philosophies is its efforts to interpret and apply existing theories of pragmatism to religious dance in historic (Quaker) and regional (southeastern

American Pentecostal) religions. By focusing on dance performance in a particular geographic region with its own cultural practices, apart from New York and other urban centers, the work brings philosophical attention to dance cultures that otherwise remain largely unattended in dance philosophy.

No attempt is offered in Mullis's *Pragmatist Philosophy* of dance to alter theoretical aspects of philosophical pragmatism. Instead, he proposes that alternative existing dance philosophies may serve as aiding or complementing a pragmatist approach to issues in dance philosophy. Mullis's succinct comments on alternatives to pragmatist dance philosophy theoretical methodologies noted in chapter 8 reference five alternative "theoretical methodologies" currently used in the philosophy of dance and performance philosophy. These include illustrative methodology in dance philosophy (illustrating existing philosophical ideas, as in Plato and Nietzsche), analytic methodology (Beardsley, McFee), phenomenology (Sheets-Johnstone, Fraleigh), poetic methodology (Salazar Sutil, Lepecki), and contextualist (McCarren, Elswit). Mullis's *Pragmatist Philosophy* thus invites a broader look at philosophy of dance as it stands today.

II

The remainder of this essay will take note of a selection of past and current contributions to dance studies that inform the current state of dance philosophy, with the aim of gathering a broad perspective on the current state of dance philosophy at the beginning of the twenty-first century. There is no established long-term tradition of dance philosophy. Philosophers past and present largely did and do not devote attention to dance. A brief note of the beginnings of dance philosophy prior to the twentieth century is followed by developments in dance philosophy during the twentieth century that offer a broader context in which to view Mullis's *Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance*.

Among the sources available for considering the current state of dance philosophy are essays appearing in academic journals. For example, a recent collection of essays on the philosophy of dance is published in a special issue of *Midwest Journal of Philosophy* (December 2019). Other sources for contemporary developments in dance philosophy are recently published books (between 2018 and 2020) that contribute to our overview of the current state of dance philosophy. Additional sources include essays on "The Philosophy of Dance" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2019 version (Aili Bresnahan), and the forthcoming Bloomsbury *Handbook to Dance and Philosophy*, publication expected in 2021.

What is happening in contemporary dance philosophy cannot be appreciated apart from its relation to the historical development of philosophers' occasional writings on dance and their antecedents in the related fields of dance history and criticism. Here follows selected highlights of philosophical and related writings referencing dance that contribute to or inform some aspects of the contemporary state of dance philosophy.

Early sources of philosophers' references to dance include often-cited references in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws VII* that introduce the philosophy of dance in relation to education in society and in reference to the philosophical theory of art as imitation. Friedrich Schiller's ideas on grace as a form of playful movement with transformative powers also suggest a link of dance to philosophy as expressed in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* and in his poetry.²

Jesuit philosopher-choreographer Claude François Ménéstrier's seventeenth-century treatise *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* (Ballets in Classical and in Modern Times) considers dance in relation to other art forms and offers philosophical commentary on the cognitive role of dance in human understanding. Such ongoing philosophical issues as dance as imitation and the role of dance in society remain of interest to the philosophy of dance today. For example, one of the principal concerns of contemporary dance philosophy is the cognitive role of dance or dance as a form of knowledge.

Other historic philosophies of dance include the nineteenth-century writings on the subject. Among these is Théophile Gautier's formalist philosophy of dance, which focuses on visual elements of dance movements and is derisive of dance with pantomime and narrative content.³ Here, the philosopher of dance views dance as "nothing more than the art of displaying beautiful shapes in graceful positions and the development from them of lines agreeable to the eye."⁴

Friedrich Nietzsche's writings on dance appear throughout his writings, from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) thru *Ecce Homo* (1908). Nietzsche's ideas on dancing and the body were in part influenced by his appropriation of practices implementing the Greek mythological notions of the Apollonian (guided by reason and beauty) versus the Dionysian (guided by emotions and instincts) drawn from the festivals and dramas of ancient Greek culture. Modern dancers Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham reportedly found philosophical support for their dance practices in Nietzsche's philosophy of dance.⁵ Nietzsche advanced the notion that the arts, including dance, have no less a claim than philosophy or science to knowledge and understanding. Thus, he too anticipates interest in dance as a form or knowledge, one of the main topics found in contemporary dance philosophy. Nietzsche's connection of dance to Apollonian and Dionysian motifs continues to influence dance philosophy in Germany and elsewhere today.

III

As new varieties of theater dance emerge in the United States and Germany in the twentieth century, the philosophy of dance continues to develop in response to changes in styles and varieties of the evolving forms of dance.⁶ Ballet was given new life through the efforts of the Russian choreographers Serge Diaghilev (1872–1929) and George Balanchine (1904–83) and the Americans Alvin Ailey (1931–89) and Twyla Tharp (1941–), among others. Inventive performance styles emerged as well. Among the innovators in modern and contemporary dance practices and theory available are the ideas and performances of Isadora Duncan, Rudolf von Laban, Hanya Holm, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Anna Halprin, Pina Bausch, Meredith Monk, Yvonne Rainer, Mark Morris, Bill T. Jones, and Jan Fabre.

These new forms of theater dance throughout the twentieth century reacted against ballet, in the forms of "modern dance" and "postmodern" dance, but also brought changes to ballet. These dance practices introduced new technical forms of bodily movement and even everyday movement to transform the field of dance art choreography and performance. Innovative approaches to dance emerge, as new forms of dance, both in the theater and in popular community forms of dance including hip-hop, now are recognized as forms of dance art.⁷ These changes in the landscape of dance

practices in the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first offer opportunities for building upon existing philosophies of dance and advancing new concepts.

Initially, mainstream philosophers of dance were slow to follow this trail of developments in the practices of dance choreography and performance, relying mainly on dance philosophy previously created with ballet in mind or simply ignoring dance as an art form of interest to philosophers. This situation accounts in part for the relatively few philosophers who undertook to advance the philosophy of dance.

The twentieth- and now the twenty-first-century interest in dance philosophy in the United States and beyond has, nevertheless, advanced in part through the efforts of two progressive-education developments. One of these featured the establishment of the dance-education program established by Margaret H'Doubler at the University of Wisconsin after her studies with philosopher John Dewey at Columbia University beginning in 1928. This program served to establish dance's standing in the university, giving it the status of an academic subject in the university open to dance philosophy, hence a subject inviting study by philosophers. It is of interest here to note that philosophy of dance in American universities began in a department of dance education.

A second event of special importance for dance philosophy in the midtwentieth century is the work of dance historian and aesthetician Selma Jeanne Cohen, whose contributions to dance studies were instrumental in laying the groundwork for both dance history and dance philosophy in the mid- to late twentieth century. Cohen founded the Dance Critic's Conference at Connecticut College in 1971, was the founding editor of *Dance Perspectives Journal* established in 1977, and edited the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, published by Oxford University in 1998. Cohen's writings on dance philosophy include "A Prolegomenon to an Aesthetics of Dance"⁸ and additional writings on dance aesthetics. She challenged philosophers in the American Society for Aesthetics to contribute to the philosophy of dance, thus contributing to philosophers' interest in writing about dance. Among the philosophers drawn to dance in part through Cohen's efforts were Monroe Beardsley, Francis Sparshott, and Rudolf Arnheim.⁹ Cohen sparked my interest in the philosophy of dance as well, through her program for dance criticism at Connecticut College.¹⁰

Philosophers contributing to dance philosophy during this period include Susanne Langer and Nelson Goodman, who viewed dance in the context of its respective philosophies of symbolism in his seminal *Languages of Art*.¹¹ (Goodman was also founder of the Summer Dance Program at Harvard and Project Zero arts program at the Harvard School of Education.) Also adding to the legend of dance philosophy during this period were Joseph Margolis and Noël Carroll and Sally Banes, with essays on the identity of dance works and related aspects of the philosophy of dance.¹² Francis Sparshott's two volumes, *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance* (1988) and *A Measured Pace: Towards a Philosophical Understanding of the Art of Dance* (1995), emerged at an important time. Sparshott's contributions to dance philosophy extend beyond theater dance and represent perhaps the most comprehensive effort focused on dance philosophy at the end of the twentieth century.¹³ Other contributors to dance philosophy during this era are David Kleinberg-Levin; David Best, whose writings on movement embraced both philosophy of dance and sports; Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen; and Julie Van Camp.¹⁴ Others whose works bear on philosophy of dance include dance critic Marcia Siegel and dance historian Mark Franko.¹⁵

Dance philosophy today appears to be on an upswing judging from the scope of research and publications dedicated to this subject. Joining American scholars are Europeans Alain Badiou, who considers dance in reference to the theater, and Jacques Rancière, who uses dance and movement as central concepts in formulating his aesthetic theory.¹⁶

Other European contributors to dance philosophy include Jean-Luc Nancy and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.¹⁷ Among the main interests especially of dance philosophers working in German universities is dancing and thinking in a body and dance as a field of knowledge; a question of dance philosophy to be explored in these contexts is the kind of knowledge the body possesses and how this knowledge is related to dance.

Dance philosophy in Germany currently functions as an integral part of dance programs at the Goethe-Institut and in various German university dance programs. Dance as research extends to performance groups, as well as to the University in Germany where the idea that meanings stem from movement enters into the practice of dance, along with its place among the interests of dance philosophers.¹⁸ Other contributions to dance philosophy emerging from Germany include *Dance and Theory*, edited by Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein (2013), which includes Susan Leigh Foster's essay "Dancing and Theorizing and Theorizing Dancing."¹⁹

IV

What, then, are the main scholarly sources now available for information on dance philosophy as we move into the twenty-first century?²⁰ Research articles by contemporary scholars published in academic journals in print or in media formats offer an important source for dance philosophy by contemporary writers. Among the main journal publications with articles on dance philosophy are these: *Dance Research Journal*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Journal of Dance Education*, *Dance Magazine*, *Contact Quarterly*, and *Journal of Music and Dance*. Other journals that offer articles on dance philosophy include these: *Performance Philosophy*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *Salmagundi*, and *The Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*.

It is rare for a philosophical journal outside the field of dance and theater to devote a full issue to dance philosophy. Yet the fall 2019 issue of the *Midwest Journal of Philosophy* (64, November 2019) devotes its entire issue to the philosophy of dance, with oversight of guest editor Patrick Londen. Perhaps this gesture reflects a growing importance for dance philosophy within the discipline of philosophy itself. The seventeen contributors chosen for this issue of *Midwest Philosophy* examine a range of subjects bearing on the philosophy of dance.

The topics chosen offer one barometer of topics receiving current attention in the philosophy of dance. The issues considered here are these: "Some Stabs at the Ontology of Dance" (Noël Carroll); "Identity in Dance: What Happened?" (Julie C. Van Camp); "Dance as Theatre Art and Practice: Somaesthetic Perspectives" (Richard Shusterman); "Can There Be Conceptual Dance?" (Anna Pakes); "Audiences Appreciating Dance" (Graham McFee); "Movement: What Evolution and Gesture Can Teach Us ..." (Maxine Sheets-Johnstone); "Image Consciousness, Movement Consciousness" (Jonathan Owen Clark); and "Dance Seen and Dance-Screened" (David Davies). Other topics included these: "Dances, Dance Works, and Choreography Works: A Plea for Conceptual Clarity" (Renee M. Conroy); "Like Sensing Subjects" (Carrie Noland); "Image Consciousness, Movement Consciousness" (Jonathan Owen Clark);

"The Paradox of Post-Performance Amnesia" (Barbara Gail Montero); "On Dancers as Coauthor," (Paul Thom); "Rhythm and Movement: The Conceptual Interdependence of Music, Dance, and Poetry" (Andy Hamilton); "Is Tap Dance a Form of Jazz Percussion?" (Ali Bresnahan); "Three Kinds of Movement" (Barry Allen); "Beyond Petipa and before the Academy ..." (Kristin Boyce).

In addition to dance philosophy found in the academic journals, scholars continue to advance knowledge of this topic in recent book publications. A selection of dance philosophy books published mainly in 2019 and 2020 offer a further context for placing Mullis's *Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance* in the context of recent publications on dance philosophy.

Among these new books of interest for dance philosophy is Anna Pakes's *Choreography Invisible: The Disappearing Work of Dance* (Oxford University Press, 2020). Focusing on Western theater dance, this volume explores the metaphysics of dances and choreographic works. Starting with historic works of dance and continuing through modern and contemporary dance, Pakes focuses on the identity of dance works through such topics as creation, repeatability, persistence, loss, and recuperation. Central to the discussion here is the question of what makes a piece of choreography a dance work independent of its respective performances? Related to this question is choreographic authorship. Pakes brings to this study both knowledge and experience in dancing, alongside the tools of analytic philosophy and familiarity with the history of dance, as well as its modern and contemporary forms.

Graham McFee's *Dance and the Philosophy of Action: A Framework for the Aesthetics of Dance* (Dance Books, 2018) represents the third in a trilogy of McFee's book-level contributions to dance philosophy. In his latest, McFee builds upon two previous volumes: *The Philosophical Aesthetics of Dance: Identity, Performance and Understanding* (Dance Books, 2011) and *Dance, Education, and Philosophy* (Meyer & Meyer Sport, 1999). Following his previous understanding that dance is a kind of doing guided by concepts and norms in an appropriate context, McFee invites the attention of two audiences outside the mainstream philosophy of dance: philosophers of action and philosophers of the mind who may have contributions to offer dance philosophy, and persons interested in dance but not at the level of technical philosophy. McFee maintains the view that the aesthetics of dance benefits from grounding in the philosophy of action. This book, thus, aims at multiple levels of interest with respect to the dance maker (choreographer), dance initiator (the dancer), and dance observer/commentator (audience). Its audience extends from those with scholarly interests to others interested in dance for personal understanding.

Susan Leigh Foster's *Valuing Dance: Commodities and Gifts in Motion* (Oxford University Press, 2019) approaches the social philosophy of dance by constructing a theory of value through which dance might be analyzed. Foster proposes that we consider dance as functioning within systems of exchange. Two forms of exchange, commodity or gift, are employed as means of positioning the value of dance. Foster argues that dance is a means of value production in the act of dancing itself. Choreographic scores are contributions to a culture. Performances generate recognition and remuneration for the dancers, dance institutions, and the community. The author draws upon the philosophical theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Baudrillard to position her views of the societal placement of dancers and dance-related activities in a philosophical frame. Following Bourdieu, Foster views dance from the perspective of the societal benefits that dance generates. In this context, the contributions of dance lie in its symbolic roles and in the status dance can impart to both its practitioners and to viewers and

patrons. Of particular interest in Foster's study is seeing how the dancers' actions, through expressing liveliness in their bodies, create value and how that value extends beyond the particular acts of its creation. Value generated by dance is then eligible as a candidate for entering into a system of cultural exchange.

Shay Welsh's *The Phenomenology of a Performative Knowledge System* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) offers a study of Native American epistemology and philosophy of dance. The book aims to develop an epistemology within a Native American worldview using interdisciplinary methodology. Welsh's approach to the philosophy of dance steps outside the boundaries typically presumed to represent Western philosophical studies of dance by its focus on the dance cultures of Native and Indigenous performance. The author, a Native scholar, approaches the topic with the aid of phenomenology and analytic philosophy, in conjunction with Native American epistemology understood as a performative system of knowledge. This study is of interest for its expansion of dance philosophy to Native cultures. Welsh represents dance in Indian life as being grounded in the belief systems and music of tribal communities. Welsh's contribution to dance philosophy accompanies a recent upsurge in the performances of Native dance among Native American communities, as represented in such groups as the Native American Theater Ensemble, Institute of American Arts, Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble, Red Arts Performing Arts Company, and Spiderwoman Theater.

Finally, Sondra Fraleigh, the editor of *Back to Dance Itself: Phenomenology of the Body in Performance* (University of Illinois Press, 2018), explores how various scholars use strands of phenomenology's concept of life worlds to advance understanding of questions that arise with respect to the philosophy of dance. Author of numerous books pertaining to the philosophy of dance, including *Dance and the Lived Body* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), and *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), Fraleigh assembles a selections of essays that expand on the themes in her previous publications. The various texts in this collection explore the interactive lifeworld of actions of the body, making and doing in the world as it relates to dance performances. Plural approaches to phenomenology including feminist phenomenology are employed by the various essayists contributing to the volume as they seek to understand how the movement found in dance interacts with other movement practices active in the world. Contributors to the volume include Fraleigh, Karen Barbour, Christine Bellerose, Robert Bingham, Karen Bond, Hillel Braude and Ami Shulman, Kimerer LaMothe, Joanne McNamara, and Amanda Williamson.

V

Given this brief overview of the current state of dance philosophy, what are some of the main concerns emerging in this field of inquiry? One of the leading issues in dance philosophy today is the status of dance as a form of knowledge. This topic raises important questions not only for philosophy of dance itself but also for philosophy and other forms of knowledge in a broader scope: if dance lays claim to being a form of cognitive knowledge, then the question arises, "How does dynamic, sensuous, corporeal practice affect our general understanding of knowledge in diverse realms of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences?"²¹ The answer lies in examination not only of dance philosophy but of philosophy itself.

Another important consideration emerging both in the prevailing views of dance philosophy and practice, as in Mullis's *Pragmatist Philosophy and Dance* and elsewhere throughout the literature on dance philosophy, is the question of the role of dance practice in the development of dance philosophy. Treating dance practice (creating and performing dance) as an element of methodology in dance philosophy is different from treating dance practice as a subject for philosophy where concepts generated by reason informed by perception and feelings are the main tools of philosophy within psychological and cultural structures. Perhaps there is an already sufficient account of how that practice shifts its role from a subject in dance philosophy to an aspect of philosophical methodology. I did not find a satisfactory account of this matter in the readings consulted for the discussion of performance in relation to dance philosophy here. Clearly, there is need for some measure of assessment here, as is the case with critical argument in other areas of philosophy.

This overview of the various approaches to dance philosophy indicates that interest in the philosophical issues concerning dance is not limited to one particular school or practice of philosophy. The tools of analytic philosophy, expressionist theories, phenomenology, pragmatism, poststructuralism, and independent philosophical perspectives offer means to explore the meaning of dance: its aesthetic and conceptual features, and its place in individual and communal experiences. The avenues of access to these philosophies of dance in university education are typically available through courses taught in departments of dance. Also, dance may be included in philosophy department courses in aesthetics, philosophy of art, or introductory courses in philosophy.

Despite progress in dance philosophy as indicated here, questions remain: are there important issues in need of greater attention in dance philosophy? One issue largely absent in current writings on dance philosophy concerns racial identity and discrimination as they relate to creation and performance and to contributions to dance philosophy. This pertains to the neglect of contributions of black and brown cultures to dance practices and theory. The racial profiles of participants in dance choreography and performance are predominantly white, despite the creative contributions of others. Dance culture has benefited from black contributors though much of institutional dance, including the philosophy of dance, which has not adequately, if at all, addressed these contributions.²² For example, Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus were both black academics and modern choreographers and dancers.

Another question not adequately answered here is what happens to philosophy of dance when it is considered from the perspective of the dancer.²³ Halifu Osumare's *Dancing in Blackness: A Memoir* (University of Florida Press, 2018), which received the Selma Jeanne Cohen American Society for Aesthetics Prize in dance aesthetics in 2019, touches on both these issues. The life contributions of Harlem Dance Renaissance dancer/choreographer Buddy Bradley also warrants a look from dance philosophers with interests in the social philosophy of dancers in the twentieth century.

With the changes in gender roles taking place in choreography and dance performance with respect to equality for female and male dancers, as well as related shifts in their roles in performance, another topic worthy of greater attention by philosophers of dance emerges: social justice and the philosophy of the body. For example, issues raised concerning dance and human rights in the book *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Dignity in Motion*, edited by Naomi Jackson and Toni Samantha Phim, identifies social justice issues relating to dance that call for philosophical investigations.²⁴ The planned arrival of the *Bloomberg Handbook on Dance*, anticipated for 2021 with essays on black dance

aesthetics, social justice, and the political philosophy of dance, offers a fuller beginning toward bringing social issues into focus in the philosophy of dance.

Also largely missing from the discussion of Western dance philosophy are philosophies needed to inform the dance in non-Western cultures such as China, India, Japan, the Middle East, and elsewhere. The roles of dancers are not the same for all cultures, and dance serves different roles in some cultures than in others. For example, in some forms, African dance female dancers and male dancers do not dance together.²⁵ A fuller development of dance philosophy will benefit from consideration of the philosophy of dance in non-Western cultures. For example, how does a change in language or a change in how the body is viewed in different cultures influence dance and the philosophical ideas that it generates? As dance philosophy addresses these cultural issues, it will no doubt welcome the ongoing support of interdisciplinary contributions. One of the immediate questions here is to investigate whether the concepts appropriate for Western dance forms remain useful for philosophy of dance as it might apply to dance in other cultures.

Where, then, does this backdrop of dance philosophy leave the subject of dance philosophy at the beginnings of the twenty-first century? The scope of much of dance philosophy by philosophers is addressed to dance as a form of art performance in the theater or other public spaces and in art education. Dance as it exists in other social forms, including religious ritual, the social dance of folk cultures, and popular street dance such as hip-hop, invites philosophy to join with dance histories, social sciences such as anthropology, and other academic cultural histories of dance and dance criticism to explore the philosophical dimensions of these forms of dance.

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Notes

1. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 7, 48, and 71.
2. Friedrich Von Schiller, "The Dance," in *The Poems of Schiller*, trans. E. P. Arnold-Forster (London: William Heinemann, 1901), 285.
3. Théophile Gautier, *Gautier on Dance*, trans. Ivor Guest (London: Dance Books, 1986); Olivia Sabee, "Théophile Gautier's Ballet D'Action: Rewriting Dance History through Criticism," *Dance Chronicle* 39, no. 2 (2016): 153–73.
4. Théophile Gautier, *The Romantic Ballet as Seen by Théophile Gautier, Being His Notices of All the Principal Performances of Ballet Given at Paris during the Years 1837–1848*, rev. ed., trans. Cyril W. Beaumont, (London: C. W. Beaumont, 1947).
5. Kimmer L. LaMothe, *Nietzsche's Dancers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 19–106.
6. Nancy Reynolds and John McCormick, *No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 1–177.
7. Julius Bailey, *Philosophy and Hip Hop* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). See also Sally Banes, "Physical Graffiti: Breaking Is Hard to Do," *Village Voice*, April 22, 1981.
8. Selma Jeanne Cohen, "Dance as an Art of Imitation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12 (1953): 232–36; "Some Theories of Dance in Contemporary Society" and "Woman as Artistic Innovator: The Case of Choreographer," in *A Sampler of Women's Studies*, ed. Dorothy G.

McGuigan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1973). Cohen initiated and served as editor of the six-volume *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), which includes essays on African, Asian, Islamic, and Western dance aesthetics: I: 13–26. The Selma Jeanne Cohen Prize in Dance Aesthetics is awarded biannually by the American Society for Aesthetics in recognition of contributions to dance philosophy.

9. Monroe Beardsley, "What Is Going on in a Dance?" *Dance Research Journal* 15, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 31–36. Francis Sparshott, *Off the Ground: First Steps towards a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 107–40; and *A Measured Pace: Toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Dance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 373–419. Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 403–9; and "The Melody of Motion," in Rudolf Arnheim, *To the Rescue of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 127–32.
10. The Connecticut College Dance Critic's Conference organized by Selma Jeanne Cohen was established in 1970 with a grant from the NEA. I participated as a critic fellow of the Dance Critic's Conference in 1971.
11. Susanne Langer, "The Dynamic Image: Some Philosophical Reflections on Dance," *Salmagundi*, no. 33/34 (1976): 76–82; "The Dynamic Image: Some Philosophical Reflections on Dance," in *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 1–13. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs Merrill, 1968), 64, 65, 121–12, 211–18.
12. Joseph Margolis, "The Autographic Nature of the Dance," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39, no. 4 (1981): 414–27. Sally Banes and Noël Carroll, "On Defining Dance," *Dance Research Journal* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 7–22.
13. Julie Van Camp's essay review "Philosophy of Dance" offers an overview of developments in dance philosophy prior to 1996 with a critique of Sparshott's two-volume study of dance philosophy. See Julie Van Camp, "Philosophy of Dance," *Dance* 19, no.3 (Winter 1976): 347–57.
14. David Kleinberg-Levin, "Philosophers and the Dance," *Ballet Review* 6, no. 2 (1977): 71–78. David Best, *Philosophy and Human Movement* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979); *The Philosophical Aesthetics of Dance: Identity, Performance, and Understanding* (Blindsted, Hampshire, UK: Dance Books, Ltd, 2011), 150–68. Roger Copeland, Marshall Cohen, eds., *What Is Dance?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1–21. Julie C. Van Camp, *Philosophical Problems of Dance Criticism* (Charleston, SC: Create Space Publishing, 2014).
15. Marcia B. Siegel, *The Shapes of Change* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1979), 135–245. Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
16. Alain Baidou, *Handbook of Inesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). For an exposition of Baidou's conception of six axioms of dance philosophy, see Jonathan Owen Clark, "Dance and Subtraction: Notes on Alain Baidou's Inaesthetics," *Dance Research Journal* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 51–64. Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, trans. Zakir Paul (London: Verso, 2019).
17. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Félix Guattari, *Machinic Eros: Writings on Japan*, ed. Gary Genosko and Jay Hetrick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

18. Esther Boldt, "Dancers as Researchers and Players," trans. Eileen Flügelm, Goethe Institut, October 12, 2012, <https://www.goethe.de/en/kul/tut/gen/tan/20364433.html?forceDesktop=1> (accessed February 9, 2021).
19. Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein, eds., *Dance and Theory* (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript, 2013).
20. The sources cited here do not include media sources such as film and video, as these have not been a major source for dance philosophy.
21. Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 10.
22. Recent antiracist protests throughout the world draw attention to concerns with racial stereotyping in the world of dance where Eurocentric body models are the norm for participation in the dance world. See recent articles in *Dance Magazine*, <https://www.dancemagazine.com/tag/black-lives-matter> (accessed February 9, 2021).
23. Aili W. Bresnahan, *Dancing Philosophy: What Happens to Philosophy when Considered from the Point of View of a Dancer* (Munich: Lehstuhl für Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie, 2016), 1.
24. Naomi M. Jackson and Toni Samantha Phim, *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Dignity in Motion* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 109–36.
25. "Gender Roles in the Art of Dance," University of Oregon Sites Post, March 14, 2015, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/taramaerckleinaad/> (accessed February 9, 2021).