

— NOTES ON THE INSTABILITY OF THE TWOFOLD NATURE OF
THE BODY, MOVEMENT, RELATION AND DANCE AS POTENTIAL FOR
READING AND MAKING WORK

A dancer is standing stage-left. She starts walking in a line up and down. She says: 'Oh my body, if only you were here with me now...' As she is saying this, she takes out a pen and inscribes the text onto her lower arm, then upper arm, then chest...

The prism body-object-subject appeared to me in my experience of being a performer and maker. Making the work I would consider that what I am doing with my body is always being looked at, this body was always an object of the audience's gaze. This happened in a dance studio where I was alone, but already in the process of conceiving the idea of the presence of an outside eye was there. I am always already an object/agent, but it always takes me to act and someone to observe (even in my imagination) to become one.

In a performance there is a complicity between the observer and the performer – one is doing, the other observing, their roles are fundamentally different, but they depend on each other. Things that are set into being by performing can only be set if there is an observer, and space between him/her and the performer, and this space of eventfulness through perception is the essential event of theater, that opens up for the observer if there is a performer and space between him/her and an observer. In artistic research, this double event is imminent to the conception of a work; I, as the author, am always both simultaneously the doer and the observer. This is a possible (practiced) impossibility. This double position of the body/being is a double position in solo/dance/authorship.

I think it is of great value to consider the body as simultaneously being an I-body-object and an I-body-being-subject in terms of making dance/art. The body as an object is not a thought towards objectification of the body, but towards its resistance to it and the potential that this has.

The body is an object made of organic tissue, more or less a separated whole and autonomous unity made of a 100 trillion little parts (cells), whose continuous activity for an average of 67.2 years produces a human subject.

In the material world, the 'body is a thing among things' (Merleau-Ponty). But, 'far from my body's being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space for me if I had no body' (again Merleau-Ponty) – the body is a location of the experience/formation of a subject. 'I am a condition of all the parameters creating me and acting upon me and it takes 'me' to perceive that. These actions are performed simultaneously

with one another. One points at the other. The body is a constant object created by and acted upon by forces of the 'external world', but it itself envelops/produces a subject – the production of subjectivity that creates and separates an individual. The subjectivity is produced by the experience of the body, but I only know the body by using it, by thinking about it I can only know about it.

Moving through the body away from it, being it and not being it, knowing it and not knowing it - these two dimensions, not being able to exist simultaneously, exist simultaneously. As a result, this creates a gap in the experience and the impossibility, disruption, discontinuity in both of the realms.

I want to look at the instability in this twofold nature of the body and to continue to follow this pattern in the way that we perceive the world, and therefore the way the world is for us, and at how this dynamic aporia /paradigm of instability can open up a perspective for looking at and making dance – by taking triggers from writings/theory/performances/dancing experience – to see how one can move between those instabilities, how those instabilities produce movement and how they can be organized by the movement.

Theater codifies watching and the body into a symbiosis. The body of a performer is always an object of the view of another body, the hidden, not doing one, and the body is never on its own, it's an extension of another's body/view. Because of that the performer's body becomes always less than itself and more than just itself. It becomes an actant (as Latour names it) and can point to the network it is a part of. The body as a part of the world it in itself contains (a relationship to) everything that is contained within the world. This actant body being can reflect to us 'our operational and relational coherences of what we do in the realization of our living' (Maturana). It becomes a possibility for a 'we' (something is built in co-dependency, co-labor), it becomes relational. It becomes an open body.

Extending the idea of the body-object/subject into its performance (being) in the world outside of the theater, this simultaneous double operation is always happening everywhere, my body making my consciousness and my consciousness re-making my body, as well as the world making my body (as gravity, gender politics, GMO food and fashion among others affect my material body) and as the experience of this body is that of an autonomous conscious subject. The body as thought in this notion is a body where there are always twofold processes at play, where doubles, not being able to exist simultaneously, exist simultaneously, it is a continuation of discontinuities, unstable, but connected.

There is always an aboutness enveloping our bodies – we see a body and it is not only the body stripped from its context that we see, but what

its being (there) is about. There are books written on the objects of the real world – the pencil, the chocolate, the chair, the toilet, the banana, the potato, the hat... and of course on the body, even its parts (the breasts, the penis, the foot, the brain) – tracking and describing the networks/fields that seem to keep the meaning of those objects. The gap between the object (and the body as well) and its function/its taken for granted systematization opens up rarely, when the object is outmoded. The object seems then to be released from the net of meaning, even if for an instant, and it becomes a ‘thing’: things, and the body in the same way (or at the same time) suddenly asserts its presence and power: we cut our finger on a sheet of paper, we trip over a road bump, a glass just crushes in our hands. These are occasions of contingency, when the interruptions of transparencies – habits of ‘looking through’ enable ‘looking at’ – an opacity. Bruno Latour says that modernity artificially made an ontological distinction between inanimate objects and human subjects: ‘[T]he subject/object dialectic itself has obscured patterns of circulation, transference, translation, and displacement’.

If, throughout the effort to make the thing sign, the thing is not an object (and) cannot become one, there might be an excess of ourselves floating around the verge of our perception of who we are. Thingness indexes a limit/liminality, the threshold between nameable and unnamable, figurable and unfigurable, identifiable and unidentifiable. How does the movement between the above named pairs/opposites/complementaries fluctuate? Could dance be looked at as a possible gesture of stepping out of the body’s daily functionality and therefore a systematization of its meaning? Does dance have the potential for creating opacity, so that we don’t look at the body’s aboutness but are confronted with a body that is still doing being illegible? Can a dancing body give another point of view to its ‘human condition’ or open the gap in the socially normalized systems of perception that could be filled up with other perception modes or experiences? Dance, in a way that all arts do, has the potential in being an opacity, but dance specifically has the body as its primary medium/location/tool/source/instrument/image. Dance does produce its aboutness, it can be analyzed, but it also always explicitly has its thing-like/(im)material/unnamable dimension. What would the strategies of a dance that attempts to build itself as an opacity be?

Dance has the body as its object/agent/medium/location/tool/source/instrument/image.

Therefore, in dance, an art work is a working, work as a verb, and it is a multiple action – for an author, performer and the audience in their inter-dependency.

A picture hangs on the wall. Is the frame of the painting a painting or a wall? The dance performance happens as having lunch happens, as a church mass happens, as people watching happens. Is the happening/witnessing/theater as a set up part of the art or part of life? The idea of the

‘object’ in dance is evasive, it is a limit-point, and as such it is useful to re-distribute perception, process, intention, attention, relations...

The architecture of a dance piece – not representing, but letting in. Presenting the equipmentality of the body/being (its moving potential) points out not the things this body/being is representing but the things the body/being is letting in. It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the body looks, rather, it is a work that lets the body be present and thus it is the body itself.

I am creating an ‘object’ (a piece), then performing it (opening up, allowing the object to release/actualize/transform, to the potential relations /subjectivizations in front of/with the audience) – or how is this object of dance/process still to be thought of differently?

The dance work’s towering up is in the complicity of doing into observing and observing as making. The audience in repose – the dancer in movement/doing. The communication between audience-performer includes and excludes, speaks about our delimitation.

Considering the body as an object is a gesture of looking for body-repose, for the body-formed matter, rather than wanting to speak about prevalence of mind upon its object body or culturally objectified bodies; looking for the strive that the dancing body is.

In dancing the body/being can’t be used up as in daily life/as an equipment for life. The body/being’s sensations can’t be used up. The set up of the body/being as a subject/object of observation in a dance-research or performance set up the body/being-world that continually sets forth into the open.

The difficulty and the potential of dance is that there is never a halt to the body/being, even though it is always an object with clear boundaries that we perceive – the body/being-earth is always there, always self-consumed, idiosyncratic, being used-up by being (all the taken for granted that keeps one’s being going).

What can choreography do – how does it become? How the concept holds the problem and therefore becomes? If our body is a place and a non-place (being), and is a part of the world and therefore in itself contains (a relationship to) everything that is contained within a world, how can I perform this body? How to build up such a work/work?

Through un-taking for granted – bringing the excessive space of the theater (through its negative space or the infinitesimal space between its codifications) to what is already there. Making choreography in a way to show a gap in its structure, and through this gap we see the real. The choreography might expose some particular context/relations, but even more, it’s interesting to put into play/work with/show/think of this not only as a collection of possibilities, but as a source of potentiality.

Creating a gap is a process of symbiotic making visible and making invisible – always being more than and less than – instability – the rela-

tional body becomes a *location* for/of continuous shifting - producing and being produced.

Creating a specific aesthetic regime through the movement of discontinuity of the movement-location opposition, or oppositions of: stage-real world, body object-body being, performance-reality, experience -thinking.

The procedure for doing so requires witnessing upon acting, analyzing upon witnessing, witnessing the analyzing, acting upon witnessing, acting the analyzing, witnessing the acting, acting upon witnessing and any other sequence of their relations.

Bringing problematic thinking together with experience, not making straight procedures, no lines with a dot/point at the end, but making a line without a point where it is about what generating this line produces/ opens the space for, usually through the inclusion of a parasite/accident/contingency or through being included within a situation/context (theater, life, interaction, duration, space). Not a straight line, but a curve – a line that produces excess (momentum/weight – the un-drawable element).

Twofoldness implies a movement. Two things being connected, like two mirror faces, maybe even being part of the one. Maybe these things stand in the same place, but are visible from different perspectives, as if they are a part of a three dimensional body – each three dimensional body contains different images in itself (ground plan, front plan, body plan...). The movement of recognition creates proximity with the point being looked at and from there another perspective opens up.

Freely thinking after Guattari's re-wording *paintings/sculptures/installations* (corresponding with categories of mastery and types of products) as *surfaces/volumes/devices* (simple categories of existence incorporating the work in the continuum of a device of existence), I wonder if *movement/dance/performance* could, looking at them through the categories of the paradigm of the twofold body, perhaps be re-worded into *instability/discontinuity/disruption* or *insufficiency/reabsorption/contingency* or *process/procedure/excess*?

In rethinking composition through writing I take another step towards my practice, I use re-mediation, a method of re-working material from a workshop with Victoria Perez and Miriam van Imschoot, where a unity of already existing material is taken and is re-made in another medium. I try to re-mediate a piece 'RZBBKMLBZ' that I made in 2011, working with the idea of the body as an object/subject. Let's see, if, in the way I use language, I can word the movement of instability that I worked with as a compositional tool and make a written performance out of it:

Imagine,
you sit on a chair,
in the dark in front of you,
you see an empty room, only with shelf holders on the wall.

For a while.

Then, slowly, in a fade, the empty room becomes furnished.

Then, in a quicker fade, it becomes a room with a body standing in it.

The body moves. It runs into the room. The room and the body collide.

The body fits the room.

The body tests the borders of the room.

The body tests the borders of the room as you see it.

The body tests the borders of itself as you see it – front, side, back, side, the full circle.

Then, the body tests time.

The time is two lines. The big line touches the numbers, the small one points at them. The lines spin, the eye blinks. The hands drop the circle.

They now hold a square. The square holds the number. 6.

The body holding hands holding the square holding number 6 moves.

Now it is holding number 9. Now it is 6.

The hands drop the inscribed surface and pick up a container. It contains red objects. The hands are holding the container holding red objects. The hands start turning. The weight of the objects takes them downwards, quickly, to the floor.

Then the weight takes the body to the floor, slowly, then again, and again. And again.

The floor is brown, the strawberries are red, the body is dressed in black. In a line on the floor there are 8 objects, all facing up, 7 strawberries and one body. You look at them from their underneath.

The body takes a strawberry and eats it, another, all of them are eaten, their green hair is left on the floor. The body leaves, but does not arrive, leaves the leaving to leave and in the middle of this leaving it leaves before leaving and the moment gets dense and the movement becomes dance and the space reassembles by the go and the cut and the drop and the empty and the outside and the pull and the resist and the proceed and the stop.

The proceeding stops.

The body continues.

Proceeding pulls back.

The body arrives.

The breath continues.

There is no head to this body, or no legs to this body. The body is a fragmented circle of skin being stretched over air, now being inside, now being outside, in your hearing.

The hands follow the rhythm. A hand movement is a hand gesture, or is it a rhythm, a thought, a movement of the volume?

The hand-volume has a cut on its surface.

The other hand-volume squeezes it, it's red.

The other hand-volume has a strawberry,

it's also red.

It squeezes it, and the red pours out.

The white wipes the red, folds around it.

The black body takes the white handkerchief and puts it into a red suitcase from underneath the table standing in the room. Then it puts into the suitcase papers, books, plants, everything that stands in the room.

While doing so, it is slowly disappearing, in a fade.

You are looking at an emptied room.

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