

Making Moves:
Professionalism, Performance, and the Mind/Body Problem
in Contemporary American Dance

“I don’t want a lot of things, you know, I want to be creative.”

-Sandra

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Senior Thesis in Sociology and Anthropology

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December 2012

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Abstract

This investigation looks at the profession of contemporary American concert dance as a site for studying the relationship between the mind and the body. Working with Foucault's model of the docile body, this thesis accepts the traditionally drawn line between ballet and modern dance as a way of highlighting how Foucault's model must be extended to include the kind of 'docility' found in professional modern dance. We examine the learning process in dance to further understand this version of docility, and enter into a discussion of what has come to be known as the mind/body problem. How does the way we conceptualize the relationship between our mind and our body affect the mind/bodies we live in? We conclude that the jobs we hold affect the people we become, not only because of the physical requirements of a career (whether typing or sledge-hammering), but because of the way a certain career influences peoples ways of thinking about and enacting the mind/body relationship. The ultimate thesis is that the individual's perception of the relationship between the mind and the body is a key example of what I will call a self-constructed-correct stance: an opinion-answer formulated by an individual to an otherwise inaccessible question that in meaningful ways informs the 'correctness' of that answer. Finally, we consider the implications of these stances on 'folk theory'. In a society that privileges the mind, what happens when we ask questions – and consider answers – from the body's perspective?

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not exist without the encouraging, insightful, and patient advising of Professor Farha Ghannam. It would not be about dance without the instruction and openness of Professor Jumatatu Poe. It would be far less interesting without the guidance of Professor Alan Baker. It would not be in Sociology & Anthropology without Professors Braulio Muñoz and Sarah Willie-LeBreton. It would not have been feasible without the contributions of Swarthmore College and the Eugene Lang Summer Research Grant, along with the organizational excellence of Rose Maio. It would not have been as fun without the fantastic dancers in the company. And it would not have been as manageable without Nick Brown, who stayed up with me too late too often, always willing to talk to me about this project. Thank you all.

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Chapter 1

An Epistemological Preface

This thesis is written about dancing by a dancer; it is by someone who has danced and performed in many techniques for many years. It is a thesis by someone who, like many of us movers, didn't really touch contemporary dance until college, and who has been hammered by the hegemony of cultural 'merit' in dance forms – notions of 'high' art and 'high' society – since they were very young. I am a dance technician, teacher, and performer who has formed opinions within the field I work. Dancers are my friends, idols, and educators. Writing from deep within has its pros and cons, and those should not be understated here.

My side of this story started when I was eight years old. After showing interest in dancing at a wedding, my mom took me to see a performance of the Nutcracker, and within a week my grandmother had enrolled me in tap and jazz dance lessons at the local studio. This was an opinionated 'competition' studio in the heart of small-town Dixie, where the fake-it-'til-you-make-it strategy worked wonders and where the cultural biases were thinly veiled. We learned Broadway-style tap (not 'style-less' Hoofing), we learned ballet (not 'waste-of-time' modern), and we only started learning Hip-Hop because the studio needed money and there was a demand. This environment has surely influenced my development of opinions about dance. I sometimes think that one of my goals in this thesis is to justify modern dance in the face of my upbringing. Of course, I am much deeper into dance now than I was 10 years ago, and my outlook on it has changed hugely since going to college. Over the years, I have integrated myself as a dancer within myself as a thinker and as a person. This elevation of status to 'dance is a part of me' points to the amount of love I have for the art form. I have studied techniques including tap, jazz,

modern/contemporary, ballet, hip-hop, mfundalai (a contemporary pan-african style), and salsa. I have had teaching jobs in tap, jazz, contemporary, and hip-hop. I have performed countless times and choreographed a dozen pieces. I have gained a broad knowledge base of Western concert dance. But I have not studied enough dance history or trained in enough non-Western techniques to write knowledgeably about them. I tend to favor watching classically trained dancers over those that haven't grown up in a dance studio, no matter what style. I also tend to favor diverse, different, and demanding movements and phrasing. My biases fall along nebulous and sometimes taken-for-granted distinctions within the world of dance that may fail to apply outside of it. In assuming my audience is not entirely made up of dancers, I struggle to articulate these distinctions, and I worry about how the sweeping generalizations this thesis makes will work in a subject that deserves far greater delicacy. Finally, this thesis must acknowledge the difficulty of capturing the nuance of performance and performance art with these – the clunkiest of all – words.

This is also a thesis written about big questions. In approaching them we must accept many of the enduring dichotomies of our species: good/bad, mind/body, science/superstition, self/society, physical/supernatural, nature/culture, but we also accept the epistemic tides that bring us to approach the questions surrounding these dichotomies in specific ways. Although this thesis is careful about how it makes moves in this investigation, we cannot overlook the influential power of Western Enlightenment thought, of modern science, of the capitalist system, and of modern philosophy on any of our inquiries. For, in many ways, the big questions we ask emerge out of these modes of thinking, and when the potential reach of their answers extends beyond this current mode, we often have difficulty conceptualizing the proper ways to pose problems and present solutions. In general, this thesis could not be more humble about the size of

its ideas relative to the size of its efforts. The theoretical underpinnings of this work attempt to contribute to a long line of people much smarter and more experienced than I, and in writing I can only hope to add a single insight to this greater discussion.

But in writing I must also embrace the tensions between myself as an anthropologist and myself as a philosopher. These two academic traditions have formed the basis of my own scholarly training, and the two are in a tug-of-war in this thesis. Similar to the tension between my education in ballet and modern dance, I sometimes think one of the goals of this project is to justify sociological theory in the face of analytic philosophy. I am pulled by the rigidity of the detached analytic tradition, but convinced of the power of entrenched sociologic tradition too. These two, like most dichotomies, do not need to be in opposition; we just need to look at their intersection.

Introduction

We are all dancing through the world, in a way, and the way we move is a reflection of both our biological selves – our physical mechanisms, needs, and limitations – and our cultural selves – our psycho-social training, needs, and expectations. The relationship between these two sides forge the distinction between what has been traditionally known as mind and body. This investigation uses professional dance as a privileged place from which to ask questions about the mind/body relationship, and more generally about the agency of individuals to inform their own answers to these types of questions. It seems clear that our professions shape ourselves and our bodies, and that the way we treat our bodies, too, shapes their future. This comes from, undoubtedly, some of the physical requirements our different jobs expect of us (whether typing

or sledge-hammering), but also from the way our jobs implicitly conceptualize our bodily relationship for us.

This, the introductory chapter, focuses on epistemology, terminology, and methodology. It outlines the main questions and motivations behind this project, and in doing so attempts to handle some of the messier sides of working in social theory: appreciating the complexity and interconnectedness of ‘it all’, acknowledging the biases we enter the discussion with, and specifying the ways in which we intend to approach our chosen problems. This sort of sweeping recognition of the analytical shortcomings of social science are absolutely necessary for an honest discussion, but are too often taken for granted and later unmentioned. This thesis strives to continue a robust recognition of these facts throughout. The rest of the present chapter is an overview of the more specific terms used in this thesis and a discussion the research settings and methods. We finish with a brief outline of the chapters of this thesis.

Terms and Usages

Throughout this thesis, several common words are used in some very specific ways, and these are worth outlining now. First, we draw on gross categorical divides between classical ballet, modern, and contemporary dance. These are delicate categories that often elude even an expert’s distinction, and we want to be careful not to oversimplify. However, at the level of abstraction these terms are used here, we can accept the ballet-modern binary. We will largely use modern and contemporary interchangeably, because as we will see, the most instructive difference is in the level of codification and regimentation.

The second grouping includes terms like the mind, body, brain, and self. Although these definitions will be further clarified in Chapter 4, a basic outline of the meanings and motivations

for using them in this way is as follows. There seems to be a qualitative difference between the way we experience the private, mental, world, and the public, physical, world. This distinction between thought and action has motivated much of modern philosophy. But there also seems to be a connection between the two that moves in both directions – because I can will myself to move my arm and I can feel my arm have pain. Modern neuroscience has given us a picture of cognition where electricity, synapses, and nerves run the show, and these advances in both philosophy and physics have motivated the distinctions between our terms. In this thesis, we take the mind to be this private mental world we occupy, with no pre-suppositions about the less-than-‘physical’ things we associate with human life (the soul, spirit, or spark). This thesis uses ‘the body’ to be the vessel in which we interact with the physical and social world. It has volume, proportion, color, scent, texture, and comportment. The brain, then, we take to be the purely physical electro-chemical matrix referred to by modern neuroscience. Finally, in saying the self, we mean to point to the whole person – mind, brain, body, and soul – again, without pre-supposing any stances about which parts of the self exist, which parts are distinct, how they interact, etc. Of course, colloquial usages of these terms tend to be inconsistent with the detailed distinctions we have drawn here, and there is an intrinsic difficulty in capturing the differences in meaning across the divide between conversation and academic presentation. However, for our purposes these differences are crucial, and this thesis strives to be clear about its usages.

Next, we have the terms ‘performance’ and ‘performativity’. In this paper ‘perform’ is used in different ways, both because of the terms’ weight in fields like anthropology and sociology, and because of its more direct application to the profession of performance artist. In one usage we follow the canon of Ervin Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical analysis of social interaction. Performance in this sense is the theatrical presentation of self, where different social

situations and goal-oriented social motivations determine the specific way someone chooses to act. As many scholars of performance theory have pointed out (Austin, Butler, Young), these choices are subtle, complex, and culturally informed. Performances are caught in the seemingly endless intricacy of socio-cultural power dynamics, and, as such, they require certain sensitivity when discussing them. However, we want to appreciate and take advantage of the fact that performances are sometimes captured with the utmost simplicity: the boss didn't want to seem uninformed, so they didn't say anything. In another usage of perform, we mean the act of participating in a show, in our case a dancer on a stage. Of course, Goffman's conception of the whole world being stage-like makes this distinction unclear, but there are some times when the difference between dancing in a rehearsal and dancing for an audience is invoked. Perhaps the most crucial distinction, however, revolves around performativity. Performances describe how rituals and social norms structure our lives. Performativity describes what something 'does' to a structure when it is performed. A famous example discussed by J.L. Austin and many others is the performative 'speech act' of saying "I do" at a wedding. This is performative in the sense that the act binds the two in matrimony, whereas the same words can arguably 'do' nothing in a less important circumstance. The performative creates what it names. For the dancers, this distinction maps onto their observable and intentional behavior insofar as when they dance, they perform the skills and social norms of dancers; but those performances are only performative insofar as, in the act of dancing, they become dancers and simultaneously influence what being a dancer is. 'Being a dancer' is indeed a large set of performances, but performative dancing is the extent to which acting like a dancer begins to inform our societal determination of who is allowed to be called a dancer. We use these definitions to talk about the mind and body – a connection that gets materialized in certain special contexts for dancers. In performing their observable and

intentional behavior, the dancers enact a conception of how their mind and body are interrelated. But, and this is the key, these behaviors are also performative acts. In enacting this conception they are simultaneously informing their own mind/body interrelationship.

A final term we employ much later in the thesis is that of ‘folk’ theory – the popular explanation of the masses. This term is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, but it is a crucial theoretical step in this thesis, and deserves an outline here. Folk theory is usually positioned as a mythological or phenomenological explanation that seems to have little or nothing to do with what science or reason wants to say is ‘really’ going on. The term is most commonly used today in reference to folk psychology – one of the few fields where strong physical evidence has yet to overshadow the day-to-day experiences and explanations of people – in which individuals make the seemingly common-sense connection between propositional attitudes and associated actions. Simply, we often attribute someone’s having done something to be an effect of a causal *wanting* to do something. She wanted the cake so she bought it. Although this example seems logical, there is no strict scientific evidence that this is how psychological decision making manifests into action, and so we call it a folk theory.

Research Settings and Methods

The research done specifically for this project was an internship/apprenticeship with the Philadelphia-based contemporary dance/theatre company idiosynCrazy Productions during the summer of 2012. During the summer and surrounding weeks, I attended over 100 hours of rehearsal, compiled around 25 detailed rehearsal notes, and conducted interviews with 8 company members, including the director and assistant director. My official title was Rehearsal Assistant, and I served for the duration of a full-length production process. I learned the

choreography, observed the creative process, and participated in it all. I stretched with the company, ate with the company, and, when the time came, I undressed for nude rehearsal with the company. My role was to stand in, sit out, know things, write things down, and dance. It was a full-time project, and it was so much fun.

During the research, I was motivated by my interests in many aspects of human motion. How do we learn it? How do we get good at it? How does it affect our presentation of self? What do the norms of the way we move say about ourselves, our societies? These are, of course, enormous questions that have intrigued me well before this project, ones that will surely not be fully addressed during this project, and ones that will continue to hold my attention afterwards. However, conducting this research has made it clear that the professional dancer is a privileged population in which to study bodily motion as performance, especially as the level of versatility and specificity required of these movers exceeds that of most other people.

Outline

Chapter 2 takes a detailed look at the differences between ballet and modern dance as they relate to regimenting the body of the performer. It adopts the Foucauldian model of the ‘docile body’ to situate the codified structure of comportment in dance within the modern age’s remapping of institutional control on the body. After analyzing the type of ‘docility’ required of contemporary dance, we contrast it with the type required of the more classical, codified, form of ballet, and point to the struggles the Foucauldian model has in extending to this different version. Within this we pull heavily from the interviews conducted with professional contemporary dancers, using their discussions of the learning process within dance to highlight the differences in ways of training a docile body.

Chapter 3 extends this discussion of the learning process to talk about perceptions of professionalism and performance in contemporary dance. We address questions about how the jobs we hold affect the people we become. We look at the kind of training required of professional dancers and its influence on the kinds of employees this trade produces. We also examine the struggle found within the capitalist system when someone is employed doing something they once did purely for pleasure, when the artistic enjoyment of dance clashes with the economic requirements of the modern age. Looking specifically at the ways in which these dancers choose to present their careers to others, we examine how implicit notions of progress and productivity in the workplace strongly influence their professional performances. Ultimately, we find that the most powerful way in which these dancers' bodies are affected by their job is not just in the physical rigor, but in the way the presuppositions of their profession support a particular relationship between the body and mind.

Chapter 4 extends these findings into a philosophical discussion of the relationship between the mind and the body. We have seen that the kind of physical regimentation Foucault points to does not cleanly apply to the kind of discipline we find in the profession studied, and, moreover, that this model of docility relies on a very specific conceptualization of the control the mind has over the body in the first place. We have also seen that our professions have influential power over the way we conceptualize this control (or lack thereof) of mind over body, and that different conceptualizations lead to different actualizations of this relationship. The ultimate thesis is that the individual's perception of the relationship between the mind and the body is a key example of what we will call a self-constructed-correct stance: an opinion-answer held by an individual to an otherwise inaccessible question that in meaningful ways informs the 'correctness' of that answer. We find that when people envision their bodies as temples, or as

biological requirements, or as an indivisible unit, these opinions matter. More powerfully, that these opinions become for all intents and purposes the true answer to the question for that individual.

Chapter 5 is a conclusion. We present an overview of the research, methods, and theoretical moves made. We offer some thoughts on how this thesis fits within a larger discussion of both dance and the mind/body problem. Finally, we make clear what this thesis has said, and how some further scholarship could help move some of the ideas presented here forward.

As we move into the next chapter, let's open ourselves to a selection of the questions that have motivated this project. What does your occupation require of you? Are you better at performing those tasks than you were when you started? What are the physical requirements of your job? Could you do the job with a broken hip? What are the mental requirements? Could you do it without ingenuity or intelligence? Which type of talent is more valued by our society, by the capitalist system? And how does the way we employ ourselves in this system influence the way we think of ourselves in this society?

Chapter 2 Docile, Professional, and Productive

“The most primordial intentional act is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings” (Young 1977:148)

Although we will postpone a discussion of the learning process until a later chapter, it seems necessary to say a few words now about how we hone bodily movements. One of the clearest clichés ever told is that practice makes perfect. Throughout all of my research, dance training, and life, it is a struggle to name a time when that idiom has failed, and as a lifelong observer of bodily motion, it has been a true wonder to watch its success. What a spectacle of coordination – the skilled barista, barber, or production-line worker. How inspiring, to see the mastery over the once-mundane turn a waitress’s arm into dinner table, or a brick-layer’s trowel into a wand. In professional dance, though, the sedimentation of years of practice results in movement that is as diverse as the assembly-line machinist’s is specific. Professional contemporary dance requires a level of dynamic bodily control rarely found elsewhere, and as such, provides an especially rich arena for studying bodily conduct as it relates to professionalism and productive senses of self. This chapter attempts to ground the profession of contemporary dance within the framework of training for skilled labor within a capitalist economy. It takes seriously the notions of bodily regimentation within the workplace and its potential translation onto emotional and psychological labor. It acknowledges the pressures of work and the needs of feeling productive. Finally, it provides the basis for the discussion of how the dancer moves through the world, mind and body. As we look at work within contemporary dance, we want to first have a sketch of what it means to be a diverse and dynamic mover. What are the requirements of being successful at this particular type of trained movement? How have we historically seen the expectations of work and being productive as a function of specific

management of the body? How does this fit within a larger discussion of bodily regimentation within the modern age?

Docile Bodies

What Foucault meant when he said *archaeology* is now a prized artifact of social science. Archaeology, in this sense, situates historical investigations within their own social, cultural, and political pasts and presuppositions. It examines the environment leading up to the birth of societal phenomena and carefully considers their offspring; archaeology understands history. This rugged rejection of both universalism and determinism has become a privileged place from which to ask historicized questions in sociology and anthropology, particularly in line with the compelling social-constructionist denials of universal claims to truth. So, in approaching Foucault's concept of the 'docile body' (1977) as it relates to regimentation in professional dance, we situate this discussion with respect to the larger lineages of dance and discipline. The following section aims to explore the concept of the docile body surrounding Western concert dance. In doing so, it adopts an often articulated, and certainly overstated, divide between traditional ballet and 20th Century American theatre dance. It also briefly considers questions surrounding mind/body dualism as they influence (or are influenced by) shifting tides of how society conceptualizes the connection between the mental and physical world. Finally, it carefully challenges the framework from which it is built; that is, this thesis presents a challenge for Foucault. Ultimately, we find that the model of docile body described by Foucault struggles to encompass the diversity of movement and process characteristic of American modern dance.

Scholarship in dance, more than in most academic fields, is limited by language. For one, few areas of study pull from such an isolated, basic, vocabulary. The vocabulary is isolated in the

sense that almost no one outside of dance uses or knows the vast majority of its terminology, and it is basic in the sense that comprehension is simple, all or nothing. Someone learning dance terminology might investigate the *fondue*, a movement in ballet, and find paragraphs and paragraphs rigorously describing it. They might recognize that the word is French and maybe even know it means *to melt*, helping them imagine the movement quality. But none of this would be as helpful as watching someone perform the *fondue* once. Understanding a term in dance usually means knowing what it looks like. This type of terminological isolation and simplicity can be contrasted to the terms of philosophy – Platonism, epistemology, reductionism – which are used throughout the academy but can take years to build an intimate understanding of. Another language roadblock is that dance is an art. Worse, it is a performance art. As such, the essence of the dance is only barely captured on film, and it is all but lost on writing. Susan Foster, an influential dance theorist, articulates this difficulty in her book, *Reading Dancing*. She notes that dance is its own form that cannot be fully captured by even the most eloquent or exhaustive notation system. It is moving through time and space, and “thus the dance remains an ephemeral event whose immediate appeal can never be captured in words. At best, criticism is able to provide a historical perspective or an aesthetic judgment for what is otherwise too fragile and fleeting for comment” (Foster 1986:xvi). And that is our humble mission. This thesis avoids dance terminology in the interest of clarity. In order to map the journey of the dancing body through recent history, we must first dedicate time to an important distinction: the rift in western theatre dance between classical ballet and American modern.

Tribal and folk dances aside, no form is as old or as influential as ballet in Western societies. It is the standard of high-society dance that all others have been measured against for hundreds of years. No other technique is as global, codified, or normalized. And no other

technique has changed so little. “Ballet as we know it today can be dated from 1672, when Louis XIV of France created a dance academy designed to train artists for the newly emerging form of ballet-operas” (Thomas 2003:95). The ballet-operas, originally music and dance productions for the French Court, grew out of increasingly high-budget folk-dance performances in the early 17th Century. Louis XIV, an avid dancer himself, opened the academy when he decided to retire from dancing the lead in each of his shows. By 1700, the basic positions and movements of ballet had taken firm root, the art form was rapidly spreading around Eurasia, and the first generation of highly trained dancers were taking dance, literally, to new heights (Thomas 2003). Ballet was discipline, training, and repetition. It was slender women, jumping, balancing, and spinning on their toes, supported by men. Raised focus, lifted stomach and sternum, arms framing the body in the most flattering of ways. The movements defied gravity, it defied nature. Of course in this denial of nature, ballet, especially in its most advanced levels, has had a long history of imposing unhealthy physical demands on its dancers. “The ballet body provides a striking example of this process of objectification through its celebration of the ideals of visualism and the pursuit of the mastery of the body over nature” (Thomas 2003:108-109). The language surrounding ‘the body’ within this discourse casts it as an object to be mastered, even a hindrance to be overcome. And this attitude has real effects, good or bad, on the dancing body and its owner.

On the other side of the dichotomy, we have modern dance, 20th Century dance. It is the sense of touch to ballet’s vision; the mood and emotion to ballet’s storyline; the inner-focus to ballet’s outward presentation. Foster’s *Reading Dancing*, borne out of the author acknowledging the sense of confusion she first felt approaching this less-than-literal dance, notes that modern dance pulls from no discrete technical vocabulary and tends to be based more on creative process than choreographic order. In her book, she closely examines the choreographic process and

products of a few of the most influential choreographers in 20th Century dance. Two of them, Georg Balanchine and Merce Cunningham, can be in this discussion cleanly divided along the ballet v. modern line, respectively. “Where Balanchine develops the spectacular, virtuoso display of the perfected body, Cunningham presents the diverse activities of the articulate body” (Foster 1986:35). Helen Thomas, a dance theorist, writes: “The [modern dance] body directs attention inwards...in contrast to ballet where the bodily focus is objectified and fashioned through its visual appearance and projections in space and time” (Thomas 2003:109). The distinction between ballet and modern, at least in these broadest of terms, is clear. It is much more difficult to pin down the distinction between ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ dance, and although it is worth a bit of further clarification, the terms are used largely interchangeably throughout this thesis. Contemporary dance is in many ways just what modern has evolved into, and as such we can roughly say the contemporary comes after modern. In the archeological sense, contemporary dance is a farther removed and more distinct artistic *episteme*, which only suits this proposed ideological divide better. With these categories established, we may now discuss the concepts of docile bodies and discipline in Foucault as a means of examining changing currents in professional dance.

In Michel Foucault’s archaeology of the prison, *Discipline and Punish* (1977), he chooses the penal system across history to gain insight into societal shifts over the last 400 years: modernity. He asks: how have society and its approach to penal code been in dialogue over time? How has the change in the penal system been connected with transformations in the distribution of power? And how has that affected our lives? The book opens with a gruesome scene of penal torture in the name of God and King. The specifics are unimportant here, but the lesson is that at some not-so-distant time ago, the 17th and 18th Centuries even, punishment for those labeled

criminal was brutally focused on the physical body. The body of the King was the body-politic, his physical presence was his control. The ‘body of the condemned’, on the other hand, was only the site of punishment, not the locus of control. However, “the classical age discovered the body as object and target of power” (Foucault 1977:136).

“The rise of modernity was accompanied by shifts in discourses that produced a profound impact on the construction of the modern subject. The ‘target’ and object of discourse shifted away from ‘the body as flesh’ to ‘the mind’ and the characterization of the body as machine in classical Cartesian thinking... In contrast to more traditional societies where the body is controlled by brute force, the body of the subject in modernity becomes caught up in a range of practices that control, constrain and objectify it through strategies of surveillance” (Thomas 2003:46)

Before then the condemned body was inseparable from the mind that motivated the crime. No amount of time or reform could change that, so punishment focused on the threat of inflicting pain as prevention. When we consider the mind distinct from the body – and, as Descartes influentially claimed, superior to it – the mind is put in charge of the body and becomes capable of changing and controlling itself. Physical pain remains a draconian deterrent but becomes a morally and philosophically unfit punishment. “The question is no longer simply: ‘Who committed [the crime]?’ But... ‘Where did it originate in the author himself? Instinct, unconscious, environment, heredity?’” (Foucault 1977:19). Execution or banishment, once the way to punish the person behind the crime was replaced by psychological reform, training, regimentation: prison. Confine these ‘dangerous’ and ‘delinquent’ physical bodies so the justice system can reform their immaterial minds. This, of course, is an over-simplified discussion of some of the most enduring topics in Foucault’s work. In addressing these topics this thesis only hopes to situate the talk of the ‘docile body’.

This Cartesian take on the connection between mind and body, moving with and motivating modernity, science, reason, anatomy, psychology, pharmacology, etc., made the body

(as separate from the psyche) something changeable, something docile. “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Foucault 1977:136). The classical age ushered in an entirely new take on self that gave those in power the authority to train, reform, and teach those they thought needed it. “By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed” (Foucault 1977:135). And so we have docility, discipline, self-improvement.

It seems clear that Foucault’s discussion of the trainable body has deep implications in dance, particularly when we remember that art reflects its specific cultural, socio-economic, and political contexts. When the ballet-opera gained popularity, it was King Louis XIV at the center, signifying his role as leader and asserting his body-imbued power. In a story particularly well-suited for Foucault’s larger argument in *Discipline & Punish* – that the target of control in the modern age has shifted to the body – the King gave up his physically-instantiated prowess in order to open a school (Thomas 2003). To regiment the art, to institute discipline upon it, the King took docile bodies and trained them. The form we know as classical ballet is thematically opposed to gravity. The mastery over gravity (also known as defying the nature of motion) echoes Cartesian mind/body dualism and the larger enlightenment canon of denying the ‘natural’ requirements of the biological body. The body as natural versus the mind as ethereal, in ballet, manifest in nearly unnatural weight, hip-rotation, flexibility, jumping height, and balance of the dancers.

This sort of virtuosic, specified movement is only achieved through a decade of practice. “Dancers undergo years of training to translate the proprioceptive sensations of movement into hypothesized images of how that movement looks and feels to another” (Foster 1986:xvi). In ballet, training accompanies strict lifestyle regulation, dedication, and commitment, not to

mention that for many people biological factors like height and skeletal structure prohibit outright their option to become a professional. In her investigation of the different training practices and philosophies associated with some highly influential dance-makers, Susan Foster, channeling Georg Balanchine, describes the proper preparation of the ballet dancer:

“Training for the dance, advises Balanchine, should begin at age seven. Students are introduced to the five basic positions of the ballet lexicon. Once these are mastered, increasingly complex movements, each with a name, are introduced...Although the exercises vary slightly each day, their sequence is strictly maintained. Training involves frequently correcting the positioning of the body; encouraging precision, dexterity, speed, and correct placement; and emphasizing the height of the extended leg, the height and duration of the leap, the length of a balance, and the number of turns accomplished with one preparation” (Foster 1986:19)

This training model is heavily disciplined and clearly a product of the societal phenomena Foucault points to with the ‘docile body’ and its manipulation. Ballet is dance borne from regimented exercise. “Exercise is that technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated” (Foucault 1977-161). In ballet, “the first aim is ‘correctness’: the ballet dancer has to comply with the rigorous demands of the system of control and mould the body to its ideal image” (Thomas 2003:97). Amidst this endless repetition, the pointed corrections, we can find a museum-quality sample of the docile body in action.

To contrast training methods, Foster discusses Martha Graham, possibly the single most important figure in American modern dance:

“For Graham, the mastery of movement in technique class is part of a two-pronged training program. Certainly dancers must cultivate the body as a powerful, responsive, instrument, but they must also prepare that part of the “*being from which whatever there is to say comes.*” Technique, then, *integrates the rigorously trained body with the fully mature psyche* through a discipline that entails acts of submission and liberation...All these acts of submission promise freedom – to express, to dance, and to be “born to the instant.” This experience of liberation justifies the years of rigorous preparation and struggle that precede it” (Foster 1986:29-30, emphasis mine)

These training ideologies are distinctly different. Although Graham is careful to point out the importance of the regimented body, the regimented mind is equally as important. Balanchine's picture imagines the ideal body, positions, and movements and normalizes all others to them, whereas Graham's picture imagines individual ideals and empowers those individuals to achieve them. Graham's is about an inner-connection with the material, one that unites the 'fully mature psyche' and the body in process and practice. Contemporary American dance, according to Foster, strives for the natural, primal, libidinal, organic way of moving the physical body. Strictness and regimentation of the body function only in the background. Years of training in contemporary dance might culminate in a pedestrian walk, at 1/100th speed (a shockingly difficult task), rather than in a grand spinning jump. Whereas ballet training seems to fit neatly into Foucault's models of discipline, docile bodies, and nature-rejection, contemporary American dance adopts a decidedly more nuanced conception of what it means to be docile. The next section examines docility from the professional dancer's perspective. Using their perceptions of what it means to be a docile worker in dance, we are led to a discussion of professionalism within the art form.

Productive

A strong trend throughout the interview process was in response to questions about preparing for a day's work in rehearsal. The dancer's conception of what it means to get ready for work provides an illustrative example of how the docility is defined within this group. One dancer, Leo, describes docility beautifully. "In order to prepare for rehearsal, it's less a physical process than a mental one... I try to create this sparkiness, this energetic, this, I would say, low inertia... a willingness to hear something and let that sort of firework in all the different directions that it might go." Low inertia: having easily malleable momentum, direction, and

mass. What Leo describes is a striving for a level of dynamic docility that seems to be greater and above the normal expectations of a job. Another dancer, Jane, addresses how this level of malleability exceeds her other job, a clerical position at a library. “It’s just being open, and being humbled to what’s being offered and what I’m capable of... I feel like when I go to my desk job, like it’s clear how I’m supposed to be everyday. But in rehearsals it’s just unpredictable.”

Undoubtedly because of the financial difficulties associated with the arts, something we will wait to discuss until the next section, this theme of dancers working other jobs to supplement their income was recurrent and gave an interesting opportunity to examine the contrasts between the expectations of dance rehearsal preparation and preparation for other jobs. Clara, a dancer that also works at a dance supply retail store, shines light on this contrast with a distinction between process-oriented and task-oriented work. “You know, going to rehearsal, it’s a much more process-oriented thing, so for me I just need to be open-minded and not have as much of an expectation. As opposed to doing something very task-oriented, like fitting shoes.” She continues on to describe how process-oriented work is impossible to ‘fake’, something she heavily implied she does when enjoying her retail job. In rehearsal, “you have to be the person you are, whatever that means, you have to be there and... eager to learn and there 100% mentally and just invested, immersed as much as possible. It’s almost, like, like you have to be as versatile as possible.” This, of course, would sound like a strange account of job preparedness if it came from a secretary or truck driver.

Our current picture is taking Foucault’s conception of ‘docile body’ and examining what being docile would mean for the professional artist in contemporary dance performance. The docile dancer is asked more of physically than other bodies in other settings, and the remapping of diverse those demands onto the psyche seems to take the notion of regimentation beyond what

is clearly covered by Foucault's model. This model works, as we have tried to show, with classical ballet, but needs some modification to encompass contemporary dance. The rest of this chapter explores the tensions between bodily regimentation as work, and artistic enjoyment as pleasure, as they collide for the professional dancer. We find that within the dichotomies of public/private and work/play, the capitalistic pressure to be 'productive' as separate from being 'fulfilled' creates conflict and resistance within the dancer as they situate themselves (and their careers) in the world.

Professional

"Isn't this your *job* to go to yoga?"
-Sandra

With an outline of the super-docile dancing body, the next step is to associate the views these dancers have towards job preparedness with their perceptions about professionalism. Dance performance, like most careers in the arts, tends to stray away from the salaries, consistent hours, and office-settings of most of the jobs we would as a culture call professional. Regardless, dancers take their careers seriously and in being a dancer they strive for a level of professionalism that simultaneously works within the alternative structure of a career in performance art and builds a framework for measuring their own senses of productivity.

In her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, political theorist Iris Marion Young describes how the modern capitalist system has revitalized the age-old divide between that which is public and private, and retraced it onto the divide between that which is appropriate in a professional setting and that which is not (Young, 1990). This shift, more accurately, is that the public sphere has increasingly become the professional, and that the important distinction is not what is done inside or outside the home, but what is done inside or outside the workplace. Creating

this business/pleasure distinction in place of the public/private split fosters a false sense of equal accessibility into the realm of respectability for all persons, but it particularly targets careers that have been historically cast as unprofessional, unskilled, or unintelligent. With membership into this respectable ‘professionalism’ as an ideologically equal-access arena, judgment of the modern body gets mapped onto a scaling of the movements, compartments, and aesthetics of the ‘professional’ in institutional settings. The compartment of the bourgeois, the professional, is slow and clear of all undue expression. “Agitation and haste, grimaces and gesticulation are opposed to slowness – ‘the slow gestures, the slow glance’ of nobility, according to Nietzsche – to the restraint and impassivity which signify elevation” (Bourdieu 1984:177). ‘Professional’ conduct is a restricted one – restrained, unaffected, unemotional, calculated. And at the same time, for the professional, “work is valued according to a hierarchy that distinguishes “intelligence” from the body” (Young 1990:222). The clearest examples used in this chapter about regimented bodily motion in the workplace – production line workers, truck drivers, etc. – are all jobs put on the lower-end of status levels, not because they are less productive, or, we can be certain, less skilled, but because ours is a society that privileges the employment of the mind. It’s hard to find an example of a high-status job that uses the movement of the body in a particularly large, skilled, specific, strong, or sensitive way outside of professional superstars, athletes, and actors. Another outlier may be the surgeon, but that is a position acquired only after a decade of formal scientific education.

So as the dancer navigates the world of professionalism within a career that falls clearly outside that which has been historically identified as professional, they continue to use the traditional standards of the professional. One of the dancers interviewed, Sandra, who also works

at a ‘dance services organization’, an office-based job that supports dancers and dance companies, gives the following account:

“So like the other day I was at work and I walked around the corner and the office manager was laying down on the floor. Which, you know, probably wouldn’t happen in another office setting. But in ours, you know, I will definitely like sit in front of the computer with my feet up on top of the monitor or something ridiculous like that. And I think it’s just being, you know, socially aware, just know what’s appropriate. You know, I could just show up wearing sweat pants, but I would probably feel a little more comfortable wearing something a bit more normal.”

There is a lot in this statement. Sandra is acknowledging the standards of professionalism set by our archetypes of office-bodily-conduct. She is considering how the particular associations her office job has to professional dance (it employs almost only dancers) influences its expectations about bodily comportment in the office. But she is also qualifying that with a sense of social awareness – being cognizant of what would be appropriate in one setting and not another. Finally, she submits to the hegemonic notions of how the professional is to behave in an office, and finds more comfort in a more ‘normal’ outfit, something implicitly more professional than sweatpants.

Despite the harmoniousness of the ideals so far put forth about how the dancer is to prepare for and be a professional at work, there is an emergent conflict associated with the dancer’s dual employment within business and pleasure. So far the picture of the dancer has been one of diverse and highly-trained bodily skill, of discipline and full-engagement, but it would be imprudent to ignore the bright side of things: that people become dancers when their hobby/interest/passion as a young person becomes their profession. These dancers, or at least the ones I interviewed, had all fallen in love with dancing years ago and decided to dedicate a part of their lives to its practice and processes. So what happens when the worker loves their job, and when their obligations as an employee outstretch their voluntary participation and enjoyment? During one of the interviews Jane, who, as you recall works also in a library, discusses that sense of friction between business and pleasure. “I feel this pressure of like, if I’m going to keep doing this, I better be doing it well.

Otherwise what's the point? I might as well just stay at my other job. Because before it was like, oh, dance, this is what I like to do. But now that it's my job it's not something I can like all the time. I have to find that balance." Finding work in what you love is as admirable a goal as any, but the way that the supply and demand of labor in this country coincides with its workers' preferred pastimes leaves space for only a relatively lucky few. Even in those special cases, the demand for the jobs drives the income way downward. Jane is acknowledging here that striking a balance between work and play, especially when they intersect, causes internal friction. She also acknowledges that the status of dance as work has transformed its meaning for her. For Jane it's almost as if the very instant dance became her job it also became something less likeable. This was a question posed to all the dancers (but not in so many words) about whether or not their status of having a profession doing what they love to do created a sense of burden or unlikeability that hurt that original love. The unanimous response was no.

If there was a burden, however, it seems like it was one of needing to feel productive. The Martha Graham synopsis from earlier in the chapter points to the dancer's dilemma when it says, 'this experience of liberation justifies the years of rigorous preparation and struggle that precede it'. In dollars per hour becoming a professional dancer would be one of the worst ways to go. Of course, as you might say, that's not what it's about. Nobody goes into dance for the bankrolls. But the requirements of capitalism in our society tie personal productivity so closely to monetary income they are almost inseparable. And the pressures of being a productive and successful person, in light of the difficulty of making money in dance, weigh heavily on many of the interviewees. Ricky, a dancer and dance teacher, speaks directly to this point. "In the United States, I feel like that's everything, you know, money is everything. So I feel like as a dance artist, historically, you're not making that much money, and I think that has a lot to do with the

dismissive notions about dance and fear towards dance as a profession.” That fear, we may interpret, stems from a lack of stability, an income lower than desired and deserved, and the fear of being dismissed as someone lacking legitimate work. “I think that it’s important for people to know that I’m a dancer by choice,” Ricky says, showing confidence in his career and affirming his choices. Clara, too, shows confidence in her decisions, finding value and productivity well beyond the dollar: “Money is never the first or second or third or fourth thing I’m thinking about. You know, what I get of it is much more rewarding than being handed a check. It’s an experience, it’s meeting new people, experiencing new people, its experiencing yourself in a different environment, in a different headspace, and I never ever expected I would be making money from this.” Monetary gains are indeed only part of employment, and for the dancer the lower returns for time spent leaves space for, or perhaps unobstructs, the true value of engagement with art and performance. Of course, there is a certain level of privilege these dancers speak from in being able to choose this kind of profession, but the unfortunate truth is that the amount of money in dance means almost all dancers have to make additional income through other means. As one of the dancers quipped: “My biggest source of income is being married.”

Overview

This chapter has looked closely at what being a professional dancer means for its employees. We began with a general word about the fantastic ability of the human body to learn movement, and, as with a motor-repetitive job, to repeat it at seemingly limitless levels of skill over time. We contrasted the specificity of movement of the factory worker with the diversity of movement of the dancer. Using Foucault’s model of the regimentation of the docile body, we then used the admittedly oversimplified dichotomy of ballet and modern dance to highlight the differences between the model’s applications. We found that the model fits nicely for ballet training – that

strictness, that mind-over-matter control – but that the additional requirements of the contemporary dance idioms (dynamic and articulate movement, emotional and psychological engagement) make it difficult for only the docile *body* to account for. Using text selected from the interviews, we then looked at how, if at all, the idea of the docility of the body is interpreted by the professional contemporary American dance performance artist. The way that the dancers prepared themselves for work, we found, underscored the notion that the demands of professional contemporary dance are much more varied and unpredictable than most other jobs. We then moved from the directly Foucauldian discussion to talk of professionalism and senses of productivity. The interviews revealed complex relationships between senses of being employed in dance, loving to dance, and feeling productive in dance, whether personally, artistically, or monetarily. Employment seems to diminish the sense of leisure associated with dancing but does not overshadow the love of it. Loving dance makes it easier to feel productive in non-monetary ways, but does not fully quiet the fear of a career in dance and its instability.

It seems clear that the job you have affects the physical person you become. And in examining what being a professional dancer means for its employees, this chapter hopes to set the ground work for a discussion of how being a professional dancer affects the performance of self in society. How does the body-based career influence the body of the performer? After seeing how the job influences the body, we will see how the job influences the folk-philosophical approaches to the issues raised with the mind/body problem. Finally, we will examine the nature of that problem within the dancer and its implications for the rest of us.

Chapter 3 Learning a Move, Learning to Dance

The present talk of docility begs for further discussion of training. How do we learn movement and how do we master it? Why do different techniques use categorically different training methods and what sorts of outcomes emerge from these processes? Theories of learning belong to a long and complex conversation that is far beyond the reach of this thesis. In writing, our intention is not to add to this conversation, but to pull from it. Learning how we learn is a question undoubtedly tied to our species, to minds, brains, individuals, psychology, neurophysiology, etc. Our folk understandings of different ‘learning styles’ may be strongly supported by neuroscientific findings in the coming centuries, and they may be replaced with another pseudoscientific theory. Regardless, this thesis attempts to find wisdom in personal accounts of the learning process. We take the stance that the phenomenologically-perceived structure of information in the mind represents in significant ways that individual’s conceptualization of and access to that information. More simply: the way we think about the storage of learned information effects the way we use it.

The dancers interviewed certainly have different learning styles. They describe, in sometimes painstaking detail, the process they perceive themselves going through when learning a particular sequence of movements (a phrase), and they often describe entirely different pictures of their process from one sentence to another. They have different histories in dance training and their perceptions have almost certainly evolved over time. So what can we gain from their accounts of learning? It seems clear that although sentence-level accounts tend to vary for individuals and for groups, there is a distinct overlap of conceptual theory that unites the different stories we have of the learning process. Thus, we can often find the most telling information in the kinds of things people do not say, or in things they say and take back, or in the

things they repeat over and over. When those interviewed draw linguistic lines between how they ‘know’ they are learning and how they ‘know’ they are not, we can start to sketch an outline of this conceptual overlap.

Interview responses tend to strongly support this kind of analysis. Not only do we see the sort of sentence-level wavering (an uncertainty, a not having thought it through) surrounding discussions of the learning process in dance, but we also see some interesting conceptualization-level consistencies. In this first example, Sandra responds with a certain amount of disorder to a question about learning a dance phrase: “You know, most of the time I want to see it first, and then I want to go slowly through the movement. I’m looking for shapes, and again rhythm is really important. Umm, sequencing, I guess. And also if there’s things you already know, that helps.” In another, different example, Clara describes her process: “I see what’s going on and I can retain it better... after that, that’s when I can go back and start to mimic or understand the movement in your body more, and you can get down to the nitty-gritty details, and on top of that comes the whole, you know, if there is an emotional aspect in it, that’s when I sort of tag that on there.” In both of these responses we can see some inconsistency about the process, especially as Sandra jumps around from one choreographic buzzword – shape, rhythm, sequence – to another. Clara’s response, then, feels more thought-out in that there seems to be some temporal order, or hierarchical structure, to the layers of choreographic sub-units. Interestingly, every dancer interviewed gave responses that reflected both a level of detachment from the details of their process, but also a conceptual picture of the process as one involving layers: rhythm, sequencing, weight, fine movements, emotion, etc.

A good example of this comes from Arianne, who describes the ‘logic’ of the movement phrase as a way of conceptualizing its organization. “Usually I look for the logic of it. So the first

things I look for are weight transfer, and initiation. Umm, and I try to kind of like get the full shape of it and don't worry about the counts or any specificity... I like watching, I like watching the person that's making it a lot. And kind of talking to myself out loud about what I see." In this response Arianne is meandering around a rough conception of her learning process, but she is clearly presenting a multi-layered view of how choreography comes to make sense for her. Much more explicitly, Leo talks directly about layering. "I like to sketch it first. The first things I try to get clear are a sort of rough outline of kind of gross, 'left limb, right limb, turn,'... and then I try to get more specific about where the impulse comes from... you know, how my weight is involved. Umm, and then I guess the third layer of information I try to record is umm, would be the more specific shapes and timing. I guess timing would be even a fourth layer, I tend to get to timing pretty late." So how do these pictures overlap? What can we say about them? And how does this model of movement training present problems for a Foucauldian conception of the modern docile body?

Answers to these questions seem to be two-fold. One side is addressed through a serious discussion of discipline as a function of the normalizing gaze, as Foucault and many since him have articulated. This continues the discussion from last chapter about contemporary dancers feeling professional and productive in their job, and asks further questions about who is determining success at this, the less-codified (and thus less easily examinable) movement forms. The other side of the answer is left largely to the final chapter, where we investigate the perceived relationship between mind and body during the training process, and more generally, in human life. We will now move into a discussion of the gaze before making some broader statements about successful contemporary dance training and its impact on dancer's self-understanding.

The Gaze

A tower in the center of a circular prison, each cell with one window facing the tower, and one facing the outer wall of the structure; wide windows allow the guard at the center to see the silhouette of each prisoner, illuminated from the exterior. Bentham's Panopticon describes the perfect disciplinary structure for Foucault: one unified center of power with the *ability to see* everyone, and every action. Any self-respecting essay on the normalizing gaze has re-constructed this structure for its reader, and it has since joined the Platonic cave as a classical piece of knowledge/power architecture. Foucault's key move in describing the Panopticon is not about the organization of the building, but in the building's potential to organize, centralize, and disperse power. The prisoner, illuminated from the back, knows his actions are visible to the guard in the tower, but he never knows at which cell the guard is looking. Eventually, Foucault points out, the presence of a guard in the tower at all becomes unnecessary. In *The Means of Correct Training*, a chapter from *Discipline & Punish* that describes the changes in institutional training and examination methods concurrent with the arrival of 'docile bodies', Foucault paints a picture of disciplining practice that supports (and is supported by) a certain model of regimented training. However, we will see that this model too, seems out of scope for the contemporary Western concert dance artist.

The above description draws perhaps unnecessary divisions between the concept of docility and the model of training that empowers it. These two are certainly inseparable. In approaching them separately we mean to simplify the presentation of the thesis, and to let each side stand alone should the other seem less convincing. The lesson we hope to elucidate is that the process of disciplining the body Foucault presents is built on a distinct picture of the relationship between mind and body, one that is challenged by the perception of that relationship

found in contemporary dance performance. We might begin by briefly outlining and highlighting ‘the means of correct training’, as Foucault observes.

Effective training is a process achieved through strict discipline, one that rests on three basic tenets: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination. A requirement of correct training is to individuate the masses with optics: to make the individual visible and accountable, so as to exert the power of being watched, of being compared, and of being different. “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals”, it sets standards, and it identifies outliers (Foucault 1977:170). In training, hierarchical observation describes the distribution of power. Foucault notes that although the pyramidal structure of hierarchy points to a ‘head’, the whole system “distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field” and ‘leaves no zone of shade’ to hide from the power of being observed (Foucault 1977: 177). This continuous field of observation means individuals are seen and compared, and the gaze of the masses functions to normalize those in view. Part of the function of bodily training, Foucault says, is to establish these normals – to bring the masses towards skilled unity rather than ‘selecting and levying’ pre-existing skill – in order to combine the efficacy of the many. What normalizing judgment allows for, then, is penalty for non-conforming. “Disciplinary punishment has the function of reducing gaps” between individual performance or conformity, and when those gaps widen, punishment and its opposite, gratification, (re)produce the hierarchies of rank, grade, or status (Foucault 1977:179). Ultimately, discipline simultaneously closes gaps and points to their existence; disciplined training normalizes and then perpetually seeks out the removal of the abnormal. For our purposes, the structure of the examination process is perhaps less instructive than the conceptual underpinnings of a hierarchical, normalizing gaze. The importance of the

examination for Foucault is, simply, to provide institutional access to where gaps exist and how big they are, to extend the reach of the gaze into its most visible, tangible form.

We might continue with an illustration of the methods of classical ballet as they relate to Foucault's model of disciplined training. Recalling the excerpt describing Georg Balanchine's training program, we are astonished by the level of strictness, of codification, of discipline, found in the passage. In another example, world renowned Russian ballerina Tamara Karsavina gives us some hope in the training process. "Natural elevation is a boon accorded to the few only; but where it is not granted by nature it can be developed by a systematic, well-planned training" (Karsavina 1962:68). But how does the notion of a hierarchical gaze play into his account? And how, if it all, can we draw a distinction between this method of teaching/learning/training movement and the methods described by the dancers interviewed for this project?

Susan Foster describes the training hierarchy of ballet, pointing out its close resemblance to the kind Foucault writes about. In the Paris Opera Ballet, whose hierarchical structure was modeled after the French court, ranking is detailed and merit-based. "The idealized career for the dancer takes him or her from ballet school to professional company, and then from the periphery of the staged action to the focal center of the choreography" (Foster 1986:19). The dancer moves from *le stagiaire* (apprentice), to a member of the *Corps de Ballet*, *un quaddrille*, then a lead dancer in the *Corps*, *un coryphéé*, *un sujet* (soloist), a *principle dancer* (*premier danseuse*), and finally to the rank of *etôile*, the star. "Training is competitive and hierarchical. With increased competence, the dancer enters more specialized realms of dancing prowess and an equally exclusive social milieu where skills are evaluated and ranked according to higher standards of achievement" (Foster 1986:19). Evaluation is the work of the teacher, choreographer, or company director, but working in such a visible space – an open studio, wearing skin-tight

clothing, surrounded by mirrors, where watching is encouraged – with a medium so easily evaluated – standardized movements, done in repetition and in unison – allows the power of the gaze to function in full force. We can see how quickly and secretly the gaze extends from teacher-pupil to pupil-pupil; how quickly we move from a single gaze, to the gaze of the masses, to a disembodied gaze, a self-policing, to no longer needing a guard in the tower. Regardless of an individual’s level of training, an institution that produces an effective system of hierarchical observation will promote self-policing, and, ultimately, a *belief* in the correctness of its normal. “No matter how skilled or famous, a dancer continues to attend daily ballet class in order to maintain and to improve the artistic instrument – the body. An almost religious nature surrounds this daily ritual, the belief in its principles, and adherence to its practices” (Hammond 1982:3).

This is not to say that self-policing removes the presence or authority of the instructor. In a technical manual of ballet, Susan Hammond, dancer and historian, writes a section called *Survival*, a guide to the student/teacher relationship. She notes that “the work of a ballet student never occurs in isolation... it is well to reflect on this cogent observation directed “To the Pupil” (in 1848) by August Bournonville... ‘When you have received a good lesson and your teacher praises your industry, remember that his exertion has been greater than yours’” (Hammond 1982:15). Of course, this kind of relationship is not limited to ballet, to dance, or to learning movement. We point out the institution of ballet not as a counterpoint to modern dance (as we so often have in this thesis) but as an exemplar of Foucault’s theories. We are working to show not that modern dance fits within a categorically different pedagogical model, but that in comparison to the institution of ballet, the structure of contemporary dance training struggles to be encompassed by what Foucault had in mind. More importantly, we want to show that the struggle is largely due to these dancers’ evolved understanding of mind and body.

Performing Under Supervision

Who supervises the internal processes of the embodied contemporary dancer? Surely the teacher, choreographer, or company director still gazes, but how are these dancers self-policing? The selections from the interviews have so far given us a picture of the learning process as one heavily based on the visual. The act of seeing, of watching, of using vocabulary that references the eye, emerged as trend that seems to be closely linked with the functionality of the gaze. The dancers' self-policing seems, then, to take on two forms. The first is of the dancers knowing that it is their job and prerogative to learn the dance phrase to the best of their ability. This simple policing is equivalent to the student that pays attention or the factory worker that stays in line. But a deeper sense of policing happens when the choreography extends into emotional or psychological labor, when the dancer is expected to manage their own engagement on a level that seems relatively inaccessible to the eyes of the choreographer or audience. What, if anything, is the difference between 'real' emotion and that which is outwardly observable?

This distinction opens yet another avenue from which the professional dancer is allowed (and expected) to continue their personal investigation of self to mind and body. In exploring the relationship between how the emotional states of their mental selves may play into the observable states of their physical selves (if such rough divisions can be drawn for now), the dancer is busy investigating the nature of docility. In one exercise we did during rehearsal, 'The Rating Game', the director called out different emotional or intentional states, and as the dancer at the center attempted to embody those states, all of us around them called out numerical scores from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest) of how effectively we felt their observable behavior represented the emotion. As the dancers struggled with embodying true anger, or elation, or whatever, the size and frequency of the fluctuations in the scores being called out pointed to the

fleeting nature of true emotional embodiment and the sensitivity we humans have in reading one another. The dancers were so physically emotive that it became in many ways the biggest reason that scores were low. You wouldn't expect an angry person to actually run around stomping and flailing their arms, or a sad person to heave and sob while pounding their fists into the ground. Too much can often have the fakest feeling, and as observers our gaze seemed as ready to pick up lies and truths.

For the dancers, this underscores the delicacy of docility. The micro-politics of bodily comportment we all navigate in the grocery store is one thing, but a job that asks for powerful and dynamic changes in psychology at the whim of the employer is something entirely different. This could be interpreted as a natural progression, a deepening of the grip of the gaze, as the surveying force moves from regimenting the behaviors of the body to forming the behaviors of the psyche. And, no doubt, this is an implicit part of the project Foucault describes in *Discipline & Punish*. The body was regimented as a way of getting to the mind, so, much later, when children get taught how to stand in line at the cafeteria, they grow up thinking that that is the appropriate way to stand in line. Moreover, they internalize a sense that to do otherwise is rude or disrespectful. They believe in it, and they teach it to their children. This is one of the most powerful ways truths are made in our society.

This thesis, however, takes the stand that the level of docility asked of the dancer extends beyond internalization and belief to a *believable internalization*. This is not just a clever play on words. In the first instance, the subject of modernity has their whole life to let the gaze sink in, to let the regimentation of their body move from observation to advocacy, to let the teacher inform and then to believe and then to inform others. In the second instance, that which we expect of the dancer, the regimenting project is constantly changing, and the process of internalization must be

done instantly and believably. This process presents the dancer the opportunity (and obligation) to constantly reinvestigate the relationship they have between their physical and psychological selves.

Overall, it seems clear that people's employment environment has strong influences on their individual conceptions of self and society. But this is of course only part of the rich intersectional identities (of race, socio-economic class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, ethnicity, etc, etc) we all have as we make moves in this world. As we take this thesis into its final chapter, this notion of intersectionality becomes an increasingly important facet in our discussion of the folk theoretical underpinnings that inform the mind/body relationship. The enduring associations our society has made across this mind/body line are rehashed through other dichotomies – man/woman, white/black, straight/gay, developed/primitive, reason/emotion – where the former is associated with mind and the latter with body. These factors cannot be ignored in a full investigation of the way our social, cultural, and biological environment shapes the approaches we take in answering the hard questions of self and consciousness. But, in the interest of staying true to the research and maintaining focus, this thesis has concentrated on only one road of this intersection.

This chapter has set out to expand on the idea that the professional contemporary dancers studied work in an employment environment that asks of them a special level of docility. This kind of docility, I argue, extends beyond the kind Foucault poses due to its close ties to psychological self-policing and to the expectation of constant re-regimentation. This continuous reinvestigation of the relationship between self and psyche (between mind and body) is perhaps best captured in the dancers' descriptions of the learning process, which, as we saw in this chapter, point to a complex and dynamic understanding of how the dancing body learns to move.

In the next chapter, we approach this question of mind and body head on. We use our basis of understanding how these dancers conceptualize the roles and requirements of their profession to approach one of the most difficult questions of our era: the mind/body problem. Using a strong appreciation of the power of folk theory in answering questions like this, the next chapter argues for the core theoretical move of this thesis: that the mind/body problem is an example of a question whose individual's responses make up their true answers (their self-constructed-correct responses), and that professional dancers are an example of a population that clearly enact this method.

Chapter 4 The Mind/Body Problem

We have so far skirted around a deep question that is intimately tied to the present investigation. The mind/body problem, as it is referred to by a broad selection of academic disciplines, explores the relationship between, simply, the physical body and the mental mind. Because the company I worked with did not include trained philosophers, and because as we will see, it is a part of this thesis that deep understanding of the concepts a trained philosopher may have available here is unnecessary, we can avoid delving too deeply into the highly technical corners of this subdiscipline. The mind/body problem, as it might be approached at first glance, notes that there seems to be a difference between the goings on of the conscious, private, mind, and the goings on of the physical, public, world around us, body included. Our experience of the world seems split between thoughts of the mind and actions of the body, yet the exact nature of the relationship, whether functionally or experientially, is unclear. One can ‘know how’ to move their arm and ‘tell’ their arm what to do and still ‘know’ that they feel pain in that arm. So how do people conceptualize this relationship? How does your profession affect your conceptualization? Is how you *think* or *feel* this is happening ever more important than what is ‘actually’ or ‘physically’ occurring? More generally, what is the relationship between what we might think of as the physical/functional/biochemical and the experiential/phenomenological/consciousness? Are we not equally comfortable calling either ‘what is *really* happening’ in different settings?

In approaching these and more complex questions, we break up the task, and pull insight from anthropological and philosophical texts, dancer interviews, and observational insights. Section 1 provides a brief overview of historical solutions to the mind/body problem and outlines the ways in which this research has compelled us to answer differently. We also consider some

of the assumptions implicit in posing such a question in the first place. Section 2 returns to the interviews for insights into how the dancers' experience of learning informs their self-constructed solution(s) to the mind/body problem. We see that the continuous engagement with the mind/body problem supported by the requirements of professional dance leads to a special kind of self-construction that we argue is causally and interpersonally 'correct'. Section 3 expands on self-construction to consider what is often called folk theory. How do communities of self-constructors form folk theories of the masses, and what can we say about this process? Overall, this final chapter wishes to show that because the jobs we hold influence our individual conceptions of the relationship between the mind and body, and because the professional dancers' employment allows for a particularly constant investigation of that relationship, the embodied dancer provides an example of how self-constructed-correct stances support folk theoretical positions.

*An Overview of
Philosophical Responses to the Mind/Body Problem*

Despite its extraordinarily broad reach, the mind/body problem has historically belonged to philosophy. And because of its complexity and nuance, not to mention the strictness and rigor of the analytical argument, the mind/body problem in philosophy is a long and difficult conversation between some of the most influential minds in the Modern West: Plato, Descartes, Wittgenstein, Ryle, to name a few. As such, the goal of this section is to provide only a very broad presentation of the most fundamental positions in the philosophy of mind. We simplify this discussion because for the most part the complexity is unnecessary for folk theoretical understandings. For our purposes, then, we can collapse all of these differences into a perhaps

overstated binary of dualism and physicalism. We will take time to outline these positions before using them as a basis for our field-research analysis.

The dualist response, made famous in René Descartes' *Meditations*, posits that states of the mind are not physical states, that the mind is a nonphysical thing somehow or another connected to a physical body. Dualism as Descartes put forth, which we grant special privilege because of its historical influence on the layman, is perhaps the most extreme separatist stance possible. The mind is completely distinct from the body, says the dualist, not just in the way it acts, but in the fact that it is 'made' of something entirely different, something non-physical. Recall that when we refer to the mind instead of the brain we are referring to whatever or wherever it is that consciousness exists, not necessarily in reference to the mushy grey electrochemical matrix found in the skull. Within this response seems to come some of the deepest beliefs of Western reason: that only a detached mind can participate in scientific inquiry, that the body represents our shared traits with the animals and should be treated as such, and that the 'high-minded' ideals of what is 'right' or 'correct' refers to a connection with a non-physically instantiated 'truth'. Often, the concept of the non-physical instantiation is hard to grasp. How could it be that the mind does not consist of atoms or physical substances, and does not have a spatial location, as Descartes would want to argue? Substance dualism, as opposed to property dualism (that the mind/body duo have different properties), is the focus of this thesis because of its closeness to the folk-philosophical stances associated with both Cartesian and 'popular' dualism. In popular dualism, named for its seeming popularity with lay-philosophers of mind, the relationship between the mental and physical is described by what Gilbert Ryle called 'the ghost in the machine' (1949). The idea is that there is, in fact, a physical location of mental substance: popularly put inside the skull, and that the relationship between the mind and the body

is like a ghostly possession of otherworldly material within the physical machine body. We will continue to mark this distinction between dualism – separate substances, one without spatial location – and popular dualism – separate substances with locations inside the body – throughout.

If the dualist response posits that the mind is made of something special and different, then the other major side of this coin is that the mind is nothing more than the brain. Physicalism posits that the mind, the soul, the body, the world, and the universe are all physical things that are describable, at least eventually, by physics. There is surely something special happening in the human brain, but that is only a result of its relative complexity, and definitely not because humans are exceptional in any way from the realm of the material. And this is compelling. The detached reason of physics has had an almost concerningly good track-record for describing the nature of the universe, and there is no sign of systemic slow-down or collapse. We want to think that no amount of mental power could truly connect us to something outside of this purely-physical universe, and conversely that without the physical world ourselves and our consciousnesses would not exist. Some perhaps undesirable side effects fall out of this stance. Letting go of universal truths – that, for instance, $1+1 = 2$ or that enslavement is worse than freedom – can lead to some nasty forms of morality-ignoring relativism. Also, letting go of that special human spark, the soul, the spirit, or whatever other words we like to associate with the exceptional human consciousness, tends to implicitly oust ideas of true invention, of free-will, and of the afterlife.

As such, popular responses to the mind/body problem often avoid staking such a strong stance on either side of the binary. Of course, the very fact that the ‘mind/body problem’ employs a language that suggests a difference between the two entities implies some

presuppositions in the way we conceptualize the relationship in the first place. The dichotomy is not necessarily only whether or not you tend towards dualism or physicalism, but how deeply ‘connected’ one sees the two sides. A physicalist could adopt a position that largely refuses the causal relationship between mind and body, but they could also refuse to refer to them by different names in the first place. However, as we have seen from some of the interview selectoins, the ways that the dancers’ tend to approach questions like this is particularly free-flowing, often from one sentence to another. It is a core tenet of this research that this kind of free-flowing response, this seeming lack of cohesion, does not point to a lack of intellectual rigor, but to a distinct method of how people approach ostensibly unanswerable questions. The key for us as the analyzers of this response method is to highlight the overlaps. If each individual’s different responses represent a circle placed on a grid, then we find our truth in where the Venn-diagrams meet.

Conceptualizing the Mind/Body Problem as a Dancer

These traditional and seemingly antithetical positions in the philosophy of mind are, as we have said, oversimplified. However, painting them with such a large brush enables us to highlight a broad distinction that seems to capture the majority of differences in the folk-theoretical underpinnings of responses to the mind/body problem. The dancer interviews, combined with my own observations from being a life-long dancer and working in this company, has lead this thesis fundamentally away from traditional approaches to the question of the relationship between mind and body. When we use the term ‘fundamentally’, we are not trying to offer a categorically new answer (like, for instance, that minds are the only physical things and our bodies exist in a scenario made popular by the Matrix: an enormous computer program that lets us think we exist in a physical world). We use fundamentally to suggest that the traditional

approaches to the mind/body problem over-privilege what we want to say is ‘really/actually/truly’ happening. By taking a fundamentally different approach this thesis offers the notion of a self-constructed-correct stance: an opinion-answer held by an individual to an otherwise inaccessible question that in meaningful ways informs the ‘correctness’ of that answer. We mean to say that to the extent that responses to the mind/body problem matter for the individuals that adopt those responses, to the extent that it influences their conceptions of self and consciousness in society, the response they choose to take on *is* what is really happening.

But how could this be so? Couldn’t we folk theorists just adopt some strategic position in which the mind and body were immortal or empowered with telekinesis? For the most part, this thesis avoids discussing these kinds of objections until later. But it is worth saying now: sure, we could adopt something like this, but would we really *believe* it, to our core, to the point at which we would jump off a cliff believing that our self-constructed-correct-stance will save us? And even if we did, isn’t that exactly what it means to act on the influence of conceptions of self and consciousness in society? This thesis wants to ignore some of these more extreme objections with a plea to folk-theory (which will get covered in detail in the next section) by saying that for the most part, culturally-informed epistemic thought (as in Foucault’s *episteme*) tends to suppress wildly aberrant stances.

So in this framework, what positions do the dancers adopt, and how does their career empower such a stance? The interview material gathered around this topic provides particularly interesting insights into the process and effects of establishing self-constructed-correct stances. When asked about her perceived relationship between mind and body during the learning process, Jane remarks on how the process of internalizing movement allows for a development in her implicit responses to the mind/body problem. “If it happens to be movement that is, like fits

within all the parameters of the movement I've done in the past, like my mind and body are kind of enmeshed, like really closely together. But if its things that I've not done before, that's when the things separate, for me, and I have to stop because I'm worried about, how does this move work?" There is, of course, an implicit sense of separation between mind and body that Jane refers to in this response. Her response is one that seems to suggest an ebb and flow of closeness between the two. But she notes that there is a unity that emerges from comfort with movement, from integrating mind and body with practice; there is a constant opportunity to reshape the mind/body relationship. Sandra gives a similar account, further supporting this notion that professional dancers are in a privileged place from which to actualize the complex relationship between mind and body. In this especially rich exchange, Sandra struggles with exactly the kind of supported uncertainty we have noted as characteristic of answers to these difficult questions:

Sandra: I think you're definitely using your mind a lot in the beginning. When you're learning the new material, when you're sequencing things, when you're memorizing. Umm, so I think a lot in the beginning, and then I think later on, you're looking to, let go of that thinking a little bit more, and try and be a little bit more clear headed, a little bit more absent of thoughts. You know, like I've read when you running, it's like, there's fewer thoughts going through your head, like it's harder to do a math problem or something like that. And I think that happens with dancing, if you're like really dancing, you're not thinking about anything.

JGD: And do you think that's because your brain is busy controlling your body?

Sandra: I don't know, maybe, maybe it's controlling the body. I'm not sure. I don't know what's it's doing.

JGD: So what about the way you learn over time allows the brain to become, like, less involved?

Sandra: I am sure the brain is involved at all times, but I think I'm not alone in thinking that the brain is about computing new information and analyzing situations and is something different from, like, something more instinctual. Like when you memorize, like when you've really learned a movement, I guess *you just know it*. So, while I'm sure the brain is involved, we're just not used to thinking that it's involved. Because we're used to thinking like, the brain is used to do math problems. So I just don't even think about it that way, I guess. I only think that I'm thinking when I hear a little voice in my head, or I hear the actual voice. So even in talking now, like I'm thinking about the words coming out, but I'm not thinking about these gestures that I'm doing at the same time. Even though they are probably also being controlled. I just don't make that link.

Sandra seems to suggest that the level of conscious thought, the level of actively 'thinking that you're thinking', is the domain of the brain, while the more 'instinctual' processes she associates

with having learned a movement phrase belong to a more unified self. Sandra's account also seems sympathetic with a physicalist model of the brain-as-computer. She cites a study about brain science and running, and wants to say that despite her sense of developing unity between the brain and body as we get more comfortable with movement, that she's 'sure the brain is involved at all times'. She is less than rigorous in the cohesion of her reply to the mind/body problem but stands on a firm and opinionated ground. Sandra knows that there may be something purely physical happening, but within her folk-response is a rejection of such a simple stance in lieu of one that empowers and has empowered her approach to dance. During the process of rehearsing a particularly intense movement mode, one where the dancers were asked to perform stark changes in emotion, intention, movement quality, relationship to gravity, etc., at the sound of an unexpected metronome click, Sandra often spoke out (in frustration) about how she understood what the movements were to be, but was unable to 'connect' or 'integrate' herself into it. She seemed to want to hold on to the kind of higher-order engagement available to exceptional humans working on exceptional problems that a strict physicalist would have to deny. Human exceptionalism, in this sense, might be one of the strongest motivators away from physicalism – until 'they' have figured out why we are so special on this planet (and for all we know in this universe), relegating the power of the inventive intellect to physics can be a hard pill to swallow.

Part of this thesis so far has been to assert that the level of expertise in participating in academic-like conversations about these big questions has relatively little to do with successful engagement with the questions. Surely, talking like an academic provides valuable levels of specificity and nuance that seem out of reach of communities who have not received this kind of training, but insofar as self-constructed-correct stances rest on the conceptions of their authors,

talking like an academic is unnecessary. However, taking on this position forces us to consider the ways in which intellectuals do approach these questions. One of the dancers, who graduated from a top-tier college and holds a Master's degree from an equally prestigious institution, can provide an interesting example of how being a trained intellectual does not necessarily remove someone from the chaos of uncertainty and the power of adopting folk-theoretical stances to these questions (it should be said that the degrees were not in dance, philosophy, or a social science). "I don't know... they're super intertwined. I think it's super complicated for me to even use these terminologies that imply a difference between the two. You know, it's hard for me to tease them apart, but it's also not uncomplicated for me to collapse them and be like, 'oh no, as a dancer my mind and body are one'. Because you know, there are certain goals which are wrapped up in that, which are ones that I might subscribe to. But it's definitely kind of strategic, you know, to bring those ideas into unity, and whether or not there's a prior reality to it, prior to my participation, I do like to participate." Here, Leo points to many of the core considerations of this thesis. He is committed to this idea that the relationship between the mind and the body is a complex one and not one that can be easily or practically 'collapsed' into a neat category. He notes the dualist leanings of the terminology, and he acknowledges that oversimplification can be dishonest. Most importantly though, he recognizes that participation in the process of forming a stance has within it a strategy, some imbedded and causally important goals, which he has the ability to manipulate in a meaningful way, despite the possibility of their being some kind of 'prior reality' to it. Ignoring what might be 'really going on', we open an opportunity to define that truth for ourselves.

In rehearsal and in leisure, it became clear that the dancers were exhibiting this kind of agency over defining their own truth about what was happening with their minds and bodies

while dancing. Each of them had an individuality in approaching material that seemed to extend beyond the different personalities we are quick to associate with different people. Their own ways of constructing meaning around movement – of building a conceptual framework whether logical or physical or emotional that motivated the successful internalization of a phrase – were very unique and often untransferrable between each other. One person’s struggle was another’s ease, and when they worked together to help transfer that knowledge, the process was more often than not mired by a lack of similarities in their undergirding conceptualizations. Arianne’s discussion of the ‘logic’ behind movement as we saw in the last chapter provides a good example of this kind of conceptual collision. “For some of the things that we’ve been doing lately, I feel like its like my brain knows what it is but my body doesn’t. So I feel like it’s a matter of my body finding the logic, which is not my logic, which is very hard to make my body do things that are not logical to me, or at least not yet logical.” When asked to clarify what she means by logic, she continues: “Logic... for example, like, [in this phrase] I go this way because my head is falling and then my whole body crumbles and then my toe goes up or something. And maybe there will be more elaborate details about the rest of the body, but [the specifics] are really the logic of the movement.” In this, Arianne is pointing not only to how she conceptualizes learning movement, but how this conceptualization forms for her a structure of understanding that often does not match up with the movements that are ‘not yet logical’. Her brain knows what to do, she says, but until she has internalized the logic her body will fail to find the kind of coalescence with mind that the other dancers have described when becoming comfortable with a movement pattern. Her conception of logic and motion forms her own truth behind it. It is no mistake that she named it a logic – something seemingly a priori and infallible.

Another example of how these dancers are conceptualizing the mind/body problem comes from Clara, who echoes much of what the other dancers have hinted at regarding a certain unity that emerges from practice and engagement with exploring the body through movement. “Well I mean with learning stuff, definitely the mind has to be there, you know, to memorize things, left arm goes here, right hand goes here. That’s definitely something that’s happening in my mind. But you know, you do something enough, and everything just goes onto autopilot. It becomes something that’s more internalized, its more subconscious.” Although her response makes it somewhat unclear, it seems like her use of the term ‘mind’ here stems from her adopting the language I used in asking the question, and that we can safely say that under our definition she means ‘brain’ when she talks about memorization. More generally, although the dualist v. physicalist divide is a crucial one to highlight in any discussion of the mind/body problem, the specificity of most of these responses hinges on whether or not the terms ‘mind’ and ‘brain’ were used in the same way we are employing them in this thesis, and not whether or not the dancers conceived of the mind existing as a distinct substance with distinct properties. Clara’s response above seems to posit (as we think most people do) a middle-ground between the dualist and the physicalist position. She is committed to the popular dualist location of her consciousness, but also seems to view the internalization process as one where the body, as distinct from the consciousness, can take over. Moreover, she underscores the notion of brain-as-computer mentioned earlier.

We have seen several examples of how dancers conceptualize the mind/body problem with regards to learning and knowing movement, but in the interview with the company director, we find the most compelling support for the key moves in this thesis. Ricky’s interview lasted the longest and included some of the most specific questions about the topics at hand. His

interview was also the last one, which gave my end of the process the opportunity to be a bit more focused on what was emerging from the larger research project. As such, many of his responses are particularly pointed to the thesis. In this passage, Ricky responds to a brief discussion of the mind/body problem, something he seemed to be at least slightly familiar with. “For contemporary western dance I think there’s a separation between mind and body because I think that that’s such a part of contemporary western thought.” When asked to clarify if he meant contemporary as in 20th Century dance or contemporary as in the 400-year-old or so Modern age, he specified that he meant them in that order respectively. For Ricky, contemporary dance, as a product of the epistemic tides of contemporary western thought, employs an implicit distinction between mind and body *because* of its intellectual heritage. He contrasted this later with contemporary African dance – a genre this thesis has not addressed – as a form that unifies the engagement of moving mind and body. However, it is clear from my own experiences of his teaching style and choreographic motivations that in saying that there is a separation between mind and body in contemporary western dance, Ricky does not want to imply that contemporary dance, compared to ballet, holds the same level of dualist leanings. He means only to underline the fact that dance reflects its home culture, and that modern dance still lives in the wake of Cartesian dualism. He continues on, in one of the clearest expositions of the self-constructed-correct stance: “I think there’s ways of thinking that maybe there’s more than just the mind and the body, maybe there’s more divisions, and maybe there’s less, you know, maybe it’s the same thing, maybe even the idea of yourself is imaginary. I think that any of those options will lead to specific ways of inhabiting yourself.” With these options we are opening ourselves to creating a unique, or at least personal, way of conceptualizing the mind/body problem as a dancer and as a human. And these conceptualizations matter. “Specific ways of inhabitation lead to different

physical choices and physical sensations, which lead to different movement.” Our very experience of consciousness is on the line. The way we move is too.

Folk Theory's Attraction

We hope that at this point it is clear that the way we, as individuals, conceptualize our responses to a question as big, inaccessible, and influential as the mind/body problem is tied to our environment, our *episteme*, and our own personal motivations. We hope it is also clear that these motivations construct for us a stance that for all intents and purposes becomes the ‘truth’, the ‘what is really going on’. But what happens when communities of self-constructed-correct stances grow together? What can we say about folk theory in general? And, in adopting a position that is not only sympathetic to it, but in support of folk theory’s efficacy, how do we defend ourselves from the pervasiveness of physics’ concerningly good track-record for describing the universe: the atoms, the falling bodies, the chemistry... the biology? the psychology? the sociology? the philosophy?

Of course, these assertions, too, come with their own presuppositions. In talking about physics we are talking about a field that is just as built on the ideas of what is the ‘right’ way of engaging in inquiry, of expanding on previous knowledge, as any other. We could imagine, albeit highly unlikely, somebody discovering a basic mathematical contradiction that would send the tower of physics toppling down. So why does it receive so much privilege? ‘Doing’ philosophy well, too, seems to be a measurement against a set of criteria almost completely tied to our certain culture of academia. In this era and in this country, those criteria rest largely on what we call ‘analyticity’ – the reach and rigor of a step-by-step argument. Perhaps as a product of my own educational environment, I cannot help but think that this way is the right way of

‘doing’ things. But are the masses of inquisitive humans asking the big questions in teepees, monasteries, tea houses, or around campfires not, too, doing philosophy? Are the dancers who constantly re-engage their relationship between mind and body not participating just as fully in the study of consciousness as the academic? If not, it seems that our notion of intellectual participation must be too limited. But if so, what can our way (the academic way) of conceptualizing inquiry say about the kind of insights or even conclusions made outside the seminar room or lecture hall? How do individual theories combine to create folk theories, and what can we learn from this process? This section takes the idea of a folk theory seriously. It acknowledges that, (a) folk theories are often powerful and pervasive truth-claims for the societies they exist in, (b) that our personal theories have real effects on the way we construct ourselves within our societies, and (c), that this interplay of self, truth, and society, is the basis of intellectual inquiry in general.

‘Folk’ theory is a term used to describe the theories of the masses, whether or not the conceptual moves of those theories find root in ‘reality’. It is important to distinguish the kind of folk theory we wish to employ when we talk about the self-constructed-correct stance from the idea of folk theory in general. Folk theories surrounding questions that seem to have a definitive and readily accessible answer, like Newtonian mechanics, do not carry the same truth-weight as those that address questions like, ‘what is the nature of the relationship between the mind and body?’ If the folk theory employed by someone is too easily debunked, if they think that what goes down must come up, then that theory has no chance of surviving long. Because the history of the relationship between scientific thought and folk theory has largely been one of piecemeal replacement – of folk theories standing in for science until science can take over – much of what is discussed in academic writing on the topic of folk theory addresses only folk psychology. Folk

psychology, in brief, describes the everyday ways in which we attribute propositional attitudes with manifested actions. She wanted to drink the coffee, so she reached for the cup and sipped it, we want to say, even though the exact process of a desire turning into action is unclear, and perhaps more importantly, has yet to be described by experimental science. In her short essay, aptly titled *Folk Psychology*, philosopher Lynne Baker outlines an important distinction between the two different things we are pointing to when we say folk psychology. The first, folk psychology (1), is “common sense psychology that explains human behavior in terms of beliefs, desires... and so on”, and the second, folk psychology (2), is “an interpretation of such everyday explanations as part of a folk theory” (Baker 1998, 317). The second version is a sort of philosophy, or, as Morton (1980) calls it, a “theory-theory”. So, when we say ‘folk’-anything in this thesis, we mean to invoke a definition of type (2), that of a “theory-theory”, that of a common sense explanation, influenced by social and cultural understandings of self, truth, and society, which forms a way of conceptualizing the world. For example, we might say that folk dualism (1) is the common sense move where individuals attribute certain instances of the mind/body connection to the separateness and/or superiority of the mental: ‘she was studying so hard she didn’t even notice the explosion.’ And we might say that folk dualism (2) is when we take such everyday observations and turn them into a theory of the mind/body connection: “what the mind is doing is separate and more important than what the body is doing”, or something else intentionally vague. Folk theory remains vague because its inputs are not scientific experiments, and its outputs are not up for scientific evaluation. Paul M. Churchland speaks to this fact when he disparages folk theory, or folk psychology more specifically, in support of what he calls eliminative materialism. The push, for Churchland, is to continue to eliminate excess complexity from our so-far-justified physicalist world-view because, all else being equal, simplicity is better.

He claims that other folk sciences: folk physics, folk biology, etc. have been so consistently eliminated by modern science's physicalism that we have no reason to think that folk psychology will fare any better, particularly because its subject of inquiry – the brain – is seemingly so much more complex than science's other topics. There is no way we could be right this time around. However, it seems that our first-person experience of consciousness opens an argument for the primacy of introspection (instead of experimentation) with regards to questions in the philosophy of mind, at least until science uncovers a better way of examining the brain than our own self-reference. Regardless, this stance on folk theory is entirely missing the point.

Folk theory gets its power not from its comparative fortitude against scientifically rigorous accounts of the world, but from its comparative impact on the lives of its believers. If someone happens to believe that all the mind is physics, then *that* is their folk theory. And if Churchland believed that this folk physicalism would never hold up to ghost-in-the-machine vindication through experimentation, then he would still be ignoring the power of belief. There is no question that dualist ideas about the workings of the mind have had major influences on the modern Western layman's conception of the mind/body connection. We speak of our mind or soul living on after our physical body's death. We say 'mind over matter' and talk about 'losing our mind'. We are almost always privileging the mind over and above the body. Even in this theory's worst case, when we superficially assess physical bodies, we still tend to attribute their beauty or lack thereof to an account of the 'inner'-person (their mental self), like when saying that obesity is a lack of self-control. Were we to, as a society, hold the folk philosophical position that the size and intelligence of the brain was directly connected to the size of the body, how different would our world be? Our hiring practices? College admissions? Romantic partner choices?... These are things that matter to us and to our lives. And this might likely stay the same

no matter how loudly the academics screamed otherwise. The point here is, folk theory is distinct from scientific theory in the way we should assess its correctness and impact. While scientific theory strives for completeness, concreteness, and infallibility, the folk theorist watches their ideological underpinnings influence their way in the world.

With this outline of folk theory, we might seek an example of how distinctly different folk theories produce different societal manifestations. Michael Lambek's anthropological work with island communities in the Indian Ocean provides us a fascinating picture of how fundamentally different folk theories affect their societies. Lambek's research revolves heavily around the kind of constructions surrounding questions of mind, body, spirit, consciousness, etc., that we address here. He takes as granted that "western thought appears to invest a good deal in the concept of the 'unaltered' or pure and unitary state of mind, characterized by reason... and hence the necessary source of ethical action" and moves from there to examine how the populations he worked with construct largely antithetical notions of reason through a fundamental difference in approaches to conceptualizing consciousness. (Lambek, 2010:722) In his paper *How to Make Up One's Mind: Reason, Passion, and Spirit Possession*, he looks at the notions of mind and shared minds within communities on the island of Mayotte. For this society, Lambek states, the ideals of reason (what should be intellectually trusted) are reflected most clearly in what we might call the most emotionally-altered state of spirit possession. "In distributing not just ideas, but authority and responsibility, among two or more minds, spirit possession handles existential matters of alternative and doubt very differently for disciplinary regimes that ask people to purify their minds" (Lambek 2010:722-723). He cites a story where a young man wants to join the army but is physically unable to perform the tasks he is asked to do at base camp. Off the base, he is fine, and he ultimately decides that because his mind – or body

– was made up for him, because it had been decided through the spirit realm that he was not to join the army, he should abandon his dream. This, of course, sounds strange. How could this be what ‘really’ happened? However, this is a clear example of how a self-constructed-correct stance was adopted by an individual who used this conception to, in some deeply meaningful psychological way, justify canceling on his dream.

In Summary

This final chapter worked to show that the company we keep influences our constructions of the relationship between mind and body. Looking at the professional dancer, we have seen how their employment allows for a recurrent investigation of the mind/body problem, and how this opportunity gives them a privileged place from which to approach this question. Because the mind/body problem falls into a small but potent category of questions that are both difficult enough to avoid easy answers and inaccessible enough to avoid easy rejections, studying the dancer as an example of how self-constructed-correct stances develop and influence has given us a look into a shrinking but resilient stronghold of folk theory. This chapter has noted, perhaps with too much emphasis, the difference between the kind of intellectual work we do in the academy and the kind we do around the campfire. It has challenged the social and cultural structures that make one of those approaches more legitimate than the other, but even though this thesis is in strong support of campfire theory, it was written at the academy. This thesis has addressed the mind/body problem without focusing on the deep specifics, and in doing so we hope to have demonstrated the ease of discussing the questions of consciousness without knowing many of the associated academic tools. Ultimately, we have asked three questions. How do our day-to-day opinion-answers to questions like the mind/body problem affect the ways we

move through the world? How does it affect the way we dance? And how does the way we dance affect the way we formulate answers?

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Research for this thesis began when I was eight, when I started taking dancing lessons. Like many participants in the arts, about once a year I convince myself that I was never any good, *but now*, now I've got it. And that is how I feel about the questions raised in this project. Studying the way my body makes moves in this world is as personal an investigation as any, and I think the same goes for consciousness. It makes sense that folk theory is the best game in town for studying questions like the mind/body problem. And I don't think that's a bad thing. However, I'm sure a couple of years from now, I'll look back and think, no, *now*, now I've got it.

Until then, it seems prudent to take stock of the journey this thesis has taken. Working within the models of bodily management Michel Foucault sets forth in *Discipline & Punish*, this thesis accepted the traditional divide between the training styles and choreographic outputs of ballet and modern dance. By studying the profession of contemporary American concert dance, we uncovered a level of 'docility' that Foucault's model struggles to encompass. The dancers are asked not only to develop an extreme diversity of movement abilities extremely quickly, but also to access and control a diverse set of psychological movements as well. Furthermore, in this latter requirement, the dancers are expected to believably internalize the emotional intentions behind their actions. This kind of docility does not seem entirely out of Foucault's scope. Rather, this thesis has tried to show that because, (a) the contemporary dancers are expected to engage this sort of 'psychological' docility, (b) the dancers are asked to be versatile, versus specialized, in their movements, and (c) because this versatility is expected instantly, Foucault's model needs to be extended in order to include this type of docility. This, of course, is set in contrast to the regimentation of classical ballet, where Foucault's model applies with shining ease, but where (a), (b), and (c) all seem absent. This investigation has approached the professional contemporary

dancer as a privileged place from which to study bodily docility not only because of the clear connections with dancing and movement repertoires, but because the requirements of professional dance allow for a constant reinvestigation of the relationship between the mind and the body. It seems that this constant access, combined with the extended docility, promotes in the dancers a self-constructed-correct response to the mind/body problem that embraces dynamic changes over time and denies static positions.

In Chapter 2, we looked closely at the dichotomy we adopt between ballet and modern dance, particularly as it pertains to differing regimentations of the dancing body. We introduced the Foucauldian ‘docile body’ as a way to situate the corporeal regimentation we find in dance within a larger societal framework. Using interviews and observations of the learning process, we continued the investigation of contemporary dance’s interaction with the mind and the body into Chapter 3, where the focus became on the effects of the normative gaze in the distinct processes of learning a move and learning to dance. These discussions were bolstered with dance theory and more quotes from interviews with the dancers.

With this framework of bodily regimentation, of the professional requirements of modern dance, and of the learning process in dance, we opened the discussion to the enduring mind/body problem. After an overview of traditional philosophical responses to the mind/body problem, there was a thorough presentation of ‘folk’ theory as it relates to what we referred to as a ‘shrinking but resilient stronghold’ of questions (the mind/body problem included) that remains best investigated with folk theoretical analysis. The interviews again provided rich examples, this time of how the dancers conceptualize the relationship between their mind and their body. We found that the kind of folk theoretical understandings of the mind/body relationship the dancers employed in their accounts of the learning process suggest that self-constructed-correct answers

move beyond the simple binary responses. In their case, this meant a general trend of approaching dance phrases mentally and slowly incorporating them into their physicality. It is a process that moves from dualism to monism, from separation to reconfiguration to unity.

We conclude that the jobs we hold affect the people we become, not only because of the physical requirements of a career (whether typing or sledge-hammering), but because of the way a certain career influences its employees to think about the mind/body relationship. The ultimate thesis is that the individual's perception of the relationship between the mind and the body is a key example of what we call a self-constructed-correct stance: an opinion-answer held by an individual to an otherwise inaccessible question. We argue that these opinions become for all intents and purposes the true answer to the question for that individual.

Further research and further thinking is needed on this subject. Most immediately, a contrasting study with professional ballet dancers would highlight how the subtle differences of training and employment found in the discipline gets mapped onto responses to the mind/body problem. A wildly different profession, perhaps an assembly line worker, would be another rich place to study self-constructed-correct answers. However, it seems like the most uncharted and promising areas of continued research are into other questions under the purview of folk theory. These would need to be hard questions – ones without easy answers – and inaccessible questions – one without easy denials. They would need to be questions that are relatively safe from the reach of the authority of science, e.g. is there a God? And questions that leave space open for interpretation, and allow the individual to inform the answer, e.g. is there a Good?

Folk theoretical answers tend to avoid binaries. The ways we have seen the dancers conceptualize this relationship between mind and body has not fallen cleanly – for anyone – into

categories like physicalism or dualism. Self-constructed-correct answers move beyond binaries as a byproduct of their owner's (un?/sub?)conscious acknowledgement that clean categories restrict versatility. For the dancers, this emerged in the thematic and dynamic progression from mind/body separation to connection during the learning process. This progression implies a folk theory that cannot be contained by either dualism or monism; even more interestingly, it cannot be contained by both.

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Appendix: Dancer Profiles and Closing Loose Ends

For the sake of clarity, and to support intersectional analysis, this appendix contains some basic information about the individual dancers who have been discussed in this thesis. From my conversations with them, many of the dancers have diverse identities, and for those I had the opportunity to ask, their responses to questions of categorical identity resist simple answers. That being said, much of this information is from my own (potentially, probably, flawed) knowledge of the way the dancers would respond. Although there is some weight to how I, as an outsider, would categorize, there is also some value to leaving it blank.

Profiles:

Sandra

Age: Mid-Late Twenties
Sex: Female
Race: White
Other Jobs: Dance Services Organization

Jane

Age: Late Twenties
Sex: Female
Race: Asian-American
Other Jobs: Library Clerk, Dance Teacher

Clara

Age: Early Twenties
Sex: Female
Race: White
Other Jobs: Dance Supply Store

Ricky

Age: Early Thirties
Sex: Male
Race: African-American
Other Jobs: Dance Teacher

Leo

Age: Late Twenties
Sex: Male
Race:
Other Jobs:

Arianne

Age: Late Twenties
Sex: Female
Race: “Not just a white girl.” Born in Bulgaria.
Other Jobs: Web Designer

There is, of course, an enormous amount of literature covering the body as a sociological and anthropological entity. Much of this research has been dedicated to the intersectional analysis of societal expectations of bodily conduct that differ along the lines of race, class, religion, and perhaps most powerfully, gender. These studies pull from possibly species-old gendered norms and more recently the differentiated expectations of male and female bodies in modernity. They talk about beauty and ordainment, of comportment and conduct, of maintenance and morality. The traditional association of the female with the bodily (and, conversely, the male with the intellectual) has survived through enlightenments, and there has been a huge amount of scholarly work dedicated to understanding this social phenomenon. Although this thesis has generally not used this kind of analysis, it begs for a gendered study of differentiated accounts of mind/body interaction between men and women, and across many categorical indicators.

Finally, the notion of emotional labor is a topic this thesis has skirted around. Contemporary dance, as was clearly shown in this analysis, seems to ask of its employees a heightened level of emotional commitment in order to ‘dance the part’ as one might say. Arlie Hochschild’s canonical work (1983) on emotional labor studies flight attendants in the 60s and

70s, finding that there has been a commodification of the interpersonal self, a ‘commercialization of human feeling’, within much of the service industry. This occurs because culture, she argues, creates the expectation for us about how to feel in certain situations (like screaming when you see The Beatles or feeling sad about a bad grade). When the modern capitalist system has started asking of its employees that they *truly enjoy* their work, this becomes the cultural expectation. For the flight attendants, their emotional labor is to feel and make others feel as comfortable as possible throughout their travels. For the dancers, then, this thesis pointed to their true enjoyment, or at least their working towards that goal, with the notion of believable internalization. They had to work with their own emotional selves to produce a believable performance, and it seems clear to me that this kind of work is a case of emotional labor.