

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

This research delineates choreography as a new aesthetics, the one of change. Through the development a series of new choreographic methodologies manifested in eight choreographic works and appropriate theoretical contextualization, this research extends traditional definitions of choreography. The integration of ideas introduced by system theory and cybernetics, especially as developed by Gregory Bateson, has informed a number of paradigm shifts in the field of choreography, as proposed by this research. Choreography is presented as an emerging, autonomous aesthetics concerned with the workings and governance of patterns, dynamics and ecologies. The research indicates that if the world is perceived as a reality constructed of interactions, relationships, constellations and proportionalities, choreography can assume the creative practice of setting such relations, or set the conditions for such relations, to emerge. The thesis suggests that choreographic knowledge harvested from perceived patterns in nature forms the basis for wider acts of human creation and ordering, and examines the immanent and prevalent political dimension of the choreographic act by inquiring how order emerges on living systems. In light of the findings, this thesis finally re-negotiates the relationship between the fields of dance and choreography, offering a complimentary vision for dance as a 'figure of thought'.

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Choreograph (v.): bodies in time and space

Choreograph (v.): act of arranging relations between bodies in time and space

Choreography (v.): act of framing relations between bodies 'a way of seeing the world'

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

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

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

Choreograph (v.): act of witnessing such an order

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

(Klien, Valk, Gormly 2008)

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Patterns are everywhere. Patterns are in between, ephemeral but real. They are only visible to us under certain conditions; in certain wavelengths for us to grasp. The fact is that those patterns govern our lives. Routines, solar systems, life and conversations – all governed by subtle frames of patterns of some sort...the patterns we live by. This is the search for patterns; patterns as Gregory Bateson reminds us ... 'that connect the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose, and all of them to me and me to you', aiming to imagine and formulate a vividly presented awareness of some profound and ambiguous structures and dynamics working in man and nature.

Patterns are not rigid, they are fluid constellations, appearing and disappearing, crystallizing and dissolving, being born and dying: an ongoing dance of creation and de-creation in the world in which we have our being - a subtle frame of flight. Amongst and in between this dance lies a world full of interaction, relationships, constellations, dependencies, arrangements and ecologies. To enquire into the world of changing patterns and the forces at play, is to enquire into the choreography of life, examining what makes us dance and why. Patterns can grow, live, learn and propagate – we might call these patterns an idea, a mug or Wilson. However these terms are only distinctions and Wilson, the mug and the idea form parts of other patterns, pattern of patterns. We, ourselves, are part of the larger choreographies and our acts are acts upon them. This requires responsibility and creative action. It requires a thorough exploration into the wider grammar of patterns, their proportionality and their paradoxes to discover the frames that bind us together and makes us see the dances we dance. With knowledge comes doubt, shedding light on the impossibility of static frames, questioning the validity and limitations of existing frames in regards to a 'wider knowing'. And with doubt comes the need for action, for rebuilding and re-framing of self; a need for changing and adjusting the way we conduct our life, interact, love, consume and apply ourselves to the social- and eco-sphere.

We have the superpowers to bring about changes; to create conducive conditions for things to happen, for patterning and re-patterning. Doing so is the act of the everyday choreographer - the negotiator, the navigator and architect of a fluid ecology we are all part of. (Klien 2005)

CHAPTER I

THE PREMISE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Last night, in sleep, I took part in a profound and massive demonstration against humanity, against the insanity and intrinsic contradictions in individuals and within society as a whole. I was amongst a throng of tens of thousands of people gathered, each holding a candle in their hand. The sense of absolute urgency was highlighted by a deathly silence. No one had any ideas or vision whatsoever. Finally, for no apparent reason, a few scattered individuals raised their candles ever so slightly and soon everyone followed. “Look”, I whispered to you, “We are finally doing something!” Michael Klien 12/2/2007 (Klien, Valk 2007)

This practice-based research project documents and contextualises the author’s own seven year long-process, tracing tentative original advances in the traditional field of choreography, via the introduction of (then) new choreographic methodologies, to the proposition, description and unfolding of a new aesthetics in its original meaning: a new discipline of ‘sensitive knowing’ (Cooper, 1992) - Choreography as the Aesthetics of Change. This research delineates the paradigm shift in thinking about choreography by redefining it as an emerging, autonomous aesthetics concerned with the workings and governance of patterns, dynamics and ecologies.

During this research period, the author proposed and conducted a rethinking of conventional concepts of choreography, opening up the discipline to other fields of human knowledge. Integral to this process have been the writings of Gregory Bateson, or more over, his way of seeing the world. Bateson’s ideas, coupled with

developments in system-theory and contemporary art, present a fundamental shift in thinking about choreography: away from the act of structuring and arranging information in time and space, superimposing order onto a seemingly inactive and passive world, towards a recognition of interconnectedness: the creative act of setting the conditions for things to happen, the choreographer as the navigator, negotiator and architect of a fluid environment that he/she himself/herself is part of.

Bateson's descriptions, insights and readings of nature form the basis for choreography to emerge as an aesthetics of change. It is difficult to trace or pinpoint Bateson's influence on this process, but his ideas have constantly been providing long-lost bridges between the worlds of numbers, straight lines, cause-and-effect and the worlds of poetry, dreams, quantities and recursivity, thereby manifesting a more substantive and richer world of patterns. Bateson harnessed a new way of thinking, and although the processes of research and development in this practice-based research project have not always related to Bateson's ideas directly, the underlying patterns of thought have been similar. Once absorbed, his thorough interpretation of nature manages to destabilise established cognitive frameworks running throughout human civilisation. Such quality of thought exposes exploitative world-views, ignorance and compartmentalised linear thinking - much of which human creation can be based upon. Discreet realities are no longer sustainable, as reality is woven through and in between different text and in between different modalities of presentation. Bateson's form of double-descriptions ("The richest knowledge of the tree includes both myth and botany" (Bateson 1988, p. 200)) makes apparent a reality that cannot necessarily be spoken about directly. His work lays bare a world of

unfathomable complexity, a reality of relations not to be adequately captured by the logic of language.

The rise of System Theory and Cybernetics in general, triggered a profound re-thinking, if only at the fringes, of many disciplines of human knowledge production. Whether it is the absurdity of the engrained Cartesian mind/body split in our Western consciousness or the illusionary divide of human culture from its biochemical context (Hoffmeyer 1996), these assumptions are being pierced by paradigm-shifts in and across the fields of biology, complexity-studies, physics, psychology and philosophy. This new “kind of thinking that has made us realise at the end of the twentieth century that we live in a ecosystemic environment in which everything is linked to everything else. This holistic –ecological perspective is now fundamental.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 173) Choreography, as outlined in chapter two and three, can make a meaningful contribution to this interconnected and interdependent view of the world. The discipline can provide the sensitive knowing for perceiving a new dimension of patterns, proportionalities, order and ecologies coupled with the forming of methodologies for creative action and creation within a world of unfathomable complexity and interconnectedness. This, the very core of this research project, presents a redefinition of choreography as a new emerging, aesthetic discipline concerned with the workings as well as governance of patterns, dynamics and ecologies.

1.1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

During this practice-based research project the following aims and objectives crystallised:

- to consolidate and extend traditional definitions and understandings of choreography through practice-based research, the creation of artefacts, the development of experimental methodologies and their conceptual (re)framing.
- to systematically develop new choreographic techniques and approaches which can explore the boundaries of human knowledge, perception and understanding; doing so by introducing ideas of System Theory and Cybernetics to choreography, focusing especially on Gregory Bateson's writings.
- to develop an appropriate language for the presentation and discussion of those new concepts and forms of choreography.
- to propose choreography as an autonomous, aesthetic discipline, the findings of which can be applied to other spheres of human endeavours, such as the social realm.
- to open the disciplines of choreography and dance to other fields of human knowledge production, able to significantly contribute to the on-going project of shaping society.

- to continuously develop and discuss cybernetic ideas from an aesthetic base, leaving the realm of linear logic and ‘realising’ an interconnected reality, embodying ideas in actions and actions in ideas.
- And finally, to (re-)negotiate the relationship between dance and choreography, offering a complimentary vision for dance.

The written part of this thesis addresses these points in consecutive order. Chapter 1 aims to give an introduction and overview to the ideas of Cybernetics and system-theory. With a view to presenting the conceptual starting points of this thesis early on, the author focuses especially on Gregory Bateson’s writings, in particular his theory of ‘mind’, as it sketches out the deeper workings of ecology. A notion of ecology, that is not primarily based on energy or matter, but on patterns of information exchange. Understanding ‘mind’ in such manner provides a fertile ground for understanding the world in terms of patterns, dynamics and interdependencies: as an ‘ecology of mind’.

Apart from Bateson, this work draws from a multitude of influences from various academic disciplines, such as biology, physics, complexity-theory, organisational-theory and critical theory. References are made throughout the text to contextualise and enrich choreographic practice from many angles. Chapter 2, ‘Towards an Aesthetics of Change’, focuses on various descriptions of choreography, aiming to carve out the ground for a new understanding of choreography. The chapter is built chronologically, reflecting the author’s practical and theoretical developments

throughout the period of 2001-2006. Early works during this period, such as ‘Nodding Dog’ or ‘Duplex’, had been concerned with the implementation of ‘non-linear choreographic principles’ based on aspects of complexity-theory, whereas later works, such as ‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’ or ‘Choreography for Blackboards’ no longer wanted to present a specific, formulated idea of ordering, but embodied the idea themselves, thereby offering the spectator actual ‘ecologies of mind’. Whereas in early work the structuring procedure/choreography always preceded the implementation/dance, and to some degree had a separate existence, later work fused these processes into one. Chapter 3, ‘The Politics of the Choreographic Act’, formulates the theoretical as well as practical consequences of choreography proposed as an ‘Aesthetics of Change’. Building on W. Gordon Lawrence writings, the chapter delineates the significance of choreography in all of human creation, perception and politics. Chapter 4, ‘Dance as a Figure of Thought’ is examining the effects of this paradigm shift in thinking about choreography for dance, presenting a specific ‘vision of’ dance, contextualised by writings of Kirsi Monni, that point towards the phenomenological dimension of this research, and Alain Badiou. Finally, this vision - Dance as a Figure of Thought - is being traced in relation to Western contemporary dance practice. The Conclusion provides a survey of the research’s outcome and proposes future fields of engagements for the discipline of choreography, while pointing towards possible further academic studies of the Aesthetics of Change.

In response to the challenges faced by society in light of a newly perceived and imagined reality as outlined in this thesis, choreography and dance can no longer develop undisturbed in a linear fashion, being content with the building and filling of theatres with text and movement fed by a production-line of training centres and

academia. These fields of human engagement can no longer rest nor build consistently upon the “stoneheaps of dead builders” (Joyce, 2000 p. 55), when Fulton reminds us that: “The space between the stones is where the survivors live.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 140) This thesis delineates a reconfigured notion of choreography and outlines how this aesthetics, just as the raised candle in the dream above, sheds light upon reality from different angles. As a tool this new found light makes for us a new way of seeing and acting within the world, moving choreography from the fringes of human knowledge production to its very core.

1.2 CYBERNETICS AND SYSTEM THEORY

1.2.1 INTRODUCING SYSTEM THEORY

Nature in Its Manner of Operation According to System Theory and Cybernetics

Art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote “art is to imitate nature in its manner of operation.” (Coomaraswamy 1934, p. 48) This assertion, often cited by John Cage (Copeland 2005), should not be confused with art imitating nature’s appearance – it suggests that the artist utilizes processes deductible from a reality as perceived by him- or herself to formulate structural methodologies.

The mechanistic concept of nature predominant so far emphasized the resolution of happenings into linear causal chains; a conception of the world as a result of chance events, and a physical and Darwinistic ‘play of dice’ (Einstein); the reduction of biological processes to laws known from inanimate nature. In contrast to this, in theory of open systems (...), principles of multivariable interactions (e.g. reactions kinetics, fluxes and forces in irreversible thermodynamics) become apparent, a dynamic organisation of processes and a possible expansion of physical laws under consideration of the biological realm, Therefore, these developments form part of a new formulation of the scientific world view. (Bertalanffy 1969, p.154)

System Theory developed out of the urge to explain ‘the world’ in terms of relationships rather than in terms of matter. The study of systems, generally summarised under the term of ‘System Theory’ is a rather new, somewhat fuzzy, academic domain, having had its initial formulation during the 40’s and 50’s of the 20th century. Closely related to the domain of Cybernetics, this ‘emerging’ and truly inter-disciplinary science has a number of ‘founders’ across the academic scope. Many of the founding fathers however, such as Heinz von Foerster, Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Gregory Bateson had strong affiliations with the field of biology. Another key-figure, Niklas Luhmann integrated and developed System Theory later on in the field of sociology. Numerous other writers applied the findings into their

fields of enquiry, such as the American writer Jack Burnham, who proposed the terminology ‘system aesthetics’, arguing that there has been “a transition from an object-oriented to a system-oriented culture.” (Skrebowski 2006) His early theoretical writing, although potentially inspiring to the overall project of incorporating system theoretical insight into artistic practice, had clearly fallen short to provide a consistent theoretical basis for action. Burnham himself denounced his theories later on stating that “system theory may be another attempt by science to resist the emotional pain and ambiguity that remain an unavoidable aspect of life.” (Skrebowski 2006) The initial hope presented by Burnham, that System Theory would provide some sort of salvation through progress, marked the downfall of much of early system-theoretical thinking, and further outlines the importance for this research to follow a consistent framework as provided by Bateson’s ideas.

The ambiguity that pervades most of system-theoretical writings, whilst a limiting factor in academic discourse, is very much one of System Theory’s strong points, as no ‘resting-point’, no rigid paradigm has yet been agreed on. Nothing is fixed along the way of inquiries, not even the basic question of what a system is. Nevertheless there is a common understanding that ‘there is’ something like the notion of ‘system’, whether such ‘system’ exists in an ‘outside’ reality, exclusively in the mind of the observer (i.e.: solipsism), or as something ‘in between’ (Bateson 2002).

At the core of System Theory lies the understanding that however complex the world might be, there are always similar or related types of organisation to be found across all levels of inquiry. If such organisation can be described and conceptualised

independent from the subject of inquiry, these principles of organisation can be used to analyse and solve problems in any domain, throughout any types of system, i.e., Gregory Bateson's treatment of the similarities of 'mind' and 'evolution', whereby he extrapolated processes and dynamics from one to explain the other. Bateson coined the influential idiom of "pattern which connects" (Bateson 1979, p. 8).

What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and orchid to the primrose and all four of them to me? And me to you? And all six of us to the amoeba in one direction and to the back-ward schizophrenic in another? (Bateson 2002, p.7)

One of the interesting things that happens if you look at your hand and consider it not as a number of bananas at the end of a sort of a flexible stick but as a nest of relations out there (...) you will find that the object looks much prettier than you thought it looked. A part of the discovery of the beauty of the biological form is the discovery that in fact it is put together of relations and not put together of parts. This means with a correction of our epistemology you might find the world was a great deal more beautiful than you thought that it was. Or might let in that fact of its being beauty, in a way that you were able of keeping it out by thinking that the world was made up of parts and wholes. [...] Relations between relations and relations between relations' relations. (sic.)
(Bateson, audio recording, 1979)

Bateson's writings as part of the larger, ongoing discourse of System Theory and Cybernetics offer a highly distinctive and unique view of nature, especially focusing on nature's manner of operation. Applying the ideas and dynamic processes as outlined by System Theory and Cybernetics to the field of choreography, invigorates and fundamentally transforms the very practice of choreography. The 'manner of operations' as offered by Gregory Bateson, Cybernetics and System Theory, has, if applied, practical as well as theoretical implication for the field of choreography as later discussed and demonstrated. According to Bateson, the world is made up of relations and therefore best understood in terms of relations. His studies of alcoholism and addiction, schizophrenia, Balinese culture, and learning in Tortoises

weave a net of arguments without evidently stating them. In a world of relations, it is the relation between his writings, between his ideas that bind his work together, cultivating a sensibility within the reader for ‘the pattern which connects’ (Bateson 1979). His collected works take on the form of one extensive ‘metalogue’, embodying the content of the text in the text’s structure itself as well as the constellations of ideas.

A metalogue is a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject. (Bateson 2000, p. 1)

Bateson offered allegories and metalogues to indirectly ‘*define*’ various systems, not definitions. He used stories to demonstrate numerous ‘systematic procedures in life’, as according to him they too are depending on relations rather than characters, subjects, or objects within. Bertalanffy however, did formulate an *inclusive* definition of systems: “A system may be defined as a set of elements standing in interrelation among themselves and with environment.”

(Bertalanffy 1969, p. 252)

1.2.2 CYBERNETIC EPISTEMOLOGY

In his later work Bateson applied the distinction of Pleroma and Creatura as offered by Carl Jung's 'Seven Sermons of the Dead' (Jung 1967) to his own theories (Bateson 1988). Jung's book insisted on the contrast between "Pleroma, the crudely physical domain governed only by forces and impacts, and Creatura, the domain governed by distinctions and differences." (Bateson 1988, p.13/44) Bateson perceived this distinction of the world as a healthier starting point than the separation of mind from matter as substances, a pre-dominant concept, whose origin he attributed to René Descartes.

In summary then we will use Jung's term Pleroma as a name for that unloving world described by physics which in itself contains and makes no distinctions, though we must, of course, make distinctions in our description of it. In contrast we will use Creatura for that world of explanation in which the very phenomena to be described are among themselves governed and determined by difference, distinction, and information. Although there is an apparent dualism in this dichotomy, between Creatura and Pleroma, it is important to be clear that these two are not in any way separate or separable, except as levels of description... We can meet the two only in combination, never separately. (Bateson 1988, p. 18)

Bateson considered Pleroma and Creatura to be the two fundamental descriptions of his key-concept of 'Epistemology', later to be labelled "Cybernetic Epistemology" (Keeney 1983, p. 16). It is the study concerned with the process of knowing: how regularities, whether these are "ecology, thought, love, or hate and human organization" (Bateson 1988, p. 20) can develop out and grow of dynamic processes between Pleroma and Creatura. The questions raised by Cybernetic Epistemology are primarily ecological:

How do ideas interact? Is there some sort of natural selection which determines the survival of some ideas and the extinction or death of others? What sort of economics limits the multiplicity of ideas in a given region of mind? What are the necessary conditions for stability (or survival) of such a system or subsystem. (Bateson 1991, p. XII)

Cybernetic Epistemology addresses the notion of ecology primarily from an informational perspective, rather than from a material or energetic point of view. This means that issues or thresholds of tolerance to change (Jones 1995) became central issues in Bateson's enquiry, forming concepts such as adaptation, stability and degradation. Ecological systems do vanish and disintegrate once their energy budget is depleted, however, as Bateson pointed out, "the systems first become degraded through loss of organisation amongst components of the ecological system." (Jones 1995, p. 169) According to Jones (1995) this sets Bateson apart from dominant views of ecology, that are concerned with specific elements within the system, such as population growth, within a biological and energetic environment. Bateson's perspective however "treats survival in ecosystems as the survival of relationships embodied in patterns of communication which are fostered by durability of descriptive propositions or ideas." (Jones 1995, p. 170) Such patterns of communication are immanent in, and form the core of, Bateson's concept of 'mind'.

1.2.3 MIND

Fundamental to the understanding of Cybernetic Epistemology is Bateson's idea of 'mind', which in this context is carefully chosen over related concepts such as Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of 'Rhizome' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Although the 'Rhizome' is a potent metaphor for the non-linear nature of information flow,

Bateson's description of 'mind' is more suitable for the development of choreography in this research, precisely as it describes the mental as arising 'in between' the physical, and is outlined in concise cybernetic terms. Intertwining additional concepts such as the 'Rhizome' in this research could have potentially obscured the path followed in terms of enquiry and artistic development. Rather than looking at mind and matter as discreet substances, Bateson discusses 'mind' according to a particular organizational process: arrangement of matter. Patterns of organization and relational symmetry evident in all living systems are indicative of this particular understanding of 'mind'. In Bateson's view all of the following criteria have to be satisfied before a system can display phenomena like thought, evolution, life, and learning; phenomena which are part of open or living systems.

- 1) A mind is an aggregate of interacting parts or components
 - 2) The interaction between parts of mind is triggered by difference, and difference is a non-substantial phenomenon not located in space or time; difference is related to negentropy and entropy rather than to energy
 - 3) Mental process requires collateral energy
 - 4) Mental process requires circular (or more complex) chains of determination.
 - 5) In mental process, the effects of difference are to be regarded as transforms (i.e., coded versions) of events which preceded them. The rules of such transformation must be comparatively stable (i.e. more stable than the content) but are themselves subject to transformation.
 - 6) The description and classification of the processes of transformation disclose a hierarchy of logical types immanent in the phenomena.
- (Bateson 2002, p. 85/86)

It is important to follow Bateson's original and detailed analysis on the topic in 'Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity' (Bateson 2002, p.85-119). Here, only a short summation of his argument is given to clarify the listed points above.

The first suggestion of a mind being an aggregate of interacting parts or components classifies the *mind*, as described by Bateson, as a system. The system's

elements might thereby satisfy some or all of the above criteria themselves (so called *subminds*). Secondly, the interactions between the elements are triggered by difference, i.e., A responds to a difference between B and C. “The number of potential differences (...) is infinite but (...) very few of them become effective differences (i.e., items of information) in the mental process of any larger entity.” (Bateson 2002, p. 92) Although systems are triggered by differences, those differences are neither energy and nor do they usually carry energy. Bateson’s third point discusses a system’s need for collateral energy. Energy in the environment, as well as energy within the system, stands in constant reciprocation. “You can take a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. The drinking is his business. But even if your horse is thirsty, he cannot drink unless you take him. Taking is your business.” (Bateson 2002, p. 93) Energy in systems is interdependent even though energy is not necessarily exchanged. The idea that mental processes require circular chains of determination is very much related to the problem of feedback. The system’s output is thereby used as an input to regulate some of the system’s parameters within, i.e., how much energy is moved around. This way a system can internally stabilise itself, avoiding ‘run-away parameters’ (such as heat or pressure) and thereby its own destruction. Point 5 relates to Korzybski’s generalisation ‘the map is not the territory’ (Bateson 2002). A system has to incorporate the classification of a cause and effect relationship into its code to create an effective, a ‘working’ map of the territory. This presupposes a certain regularity between cause and effect. Without this regularity a mind could not deduct the difference between the two concepts and would fail to operate effectively in its environment, as all actions would be based on random decisions. Point 6 relates to the system’s ability to contextualise information

by creating different logical types (i.e., what makes a mammal distinguish serious from playful actions).

we can assert that any ongoing ensemble of event and objects which has the appropriate complexity of causal circuits and the appropriate energy relations will surely show mental characteristics. It will compare, that is, be responsive to difference (in addition to being affected by ordinary physical ‘causes’ such as impact and force). It will ‘process information’ and will inevitably be self-corrective either towards homeostatic optima or toward the maximization of certain variables. (Bateson 2000, p. 315)

It is legitimate to equate Bateson’s understanding of ‘Mind’ to the general system-theoretical perception of ‘open systems’. In fact, Bateson might have offered the most accurate and general description of an open system yet. Open Systems function in a stochastic manner. ‘Stochastic’ is used in its non-mathematical meaning – outlined in Bateson’s *Mind and Nature*. “If a sequence of events combines a random component with a selective process so that only certain outcomes of the random are allowed to endure, that sequence is said to be stochastic.” (Bateson 1988, p. 211)

In stark contrast to the Newtonian way of operation, whereby the next state of the system is fully specified by the combination of the system inputs, open systems follow a stochastic mode of operation. Most, if not all, open systems exhibit stochastic, internal procedures, meaning that events are distributed in a partly random manner, whereby some of them can result in a ‘favourable’ consequence.

1.2.4 ISSUES OF CONTROL

Mind, throughout this document, is understood as a specific aggregate of relations and interactions rather than referring to a distinct feature or ‘higher’ intelligence, therefore mental processes are characterised by their dispersed control; the overall control is not to be found in any of the component parts. Control is an emergent property. Within a running system it is a distributed property of the whole system, whereby elements can be or become empowered to guide or actively influence the overall progression of the structure. Never though can any part have total control over any whole:

A human being in relation with another has very limited control over what happens in that relationship. He is part of a two-person unit, and the control, which any part can have over any whole is strictly limited. (...) The whole is always in meta relationship with its parts. As in logic the proposition can never determine the meta-proposition, so also in matters of control the smaller context can never determine the larger. (Bateson 2000, p. 267)

1.2.5 FORMALISATION AND LOGIC

Formalisation within System Theory is exceedingly limited as open systems follow stochastic processes and incorporate various complex feedback procedures. “Logic is a poor model of cause and effect.” (Bateson 2002, p. 52) The reason is the problem of recursiveness and feedback. Feedback means that the effect the output has on the environment is fed back into the system as an input. This so-called feedbackloop can make a system self-regulating by responding to the effects its action has on the environment, i.e., in stabilizing or directing certain actions. The process of feedback involves the substitution of the linear chain of cause and effect familiar in most human endeavours by a circular causality. A closed feedback loop implies the

merging of cause and effect. Bateson raised the point of logic being a rather poor model to understand systems and their cause and effect as feedback loops break up the linear understanding of cause and effect into more complex recursive workings. Although logic can be reversed to one's liking, the effect will never go before the cause.

Bateson argued that linear systems of causation, if A and B, then C and if A then B then C, etc are unsuitable tools when it comes to describing the world of mind, in fact when one attempts to fully describe any sort of circular causal system. Nature's processes, Bateson argued, are based on a different kind of logic and demonstrated his view: Firstly, the traditional syllogism, called Barbara, followed by Bateson's grass syllogism:

Men die.
Socrates is a man.
Socrates will die.

Grass dies.
Men die.
Men are grass.
(Bateson 1992, p. 240)

The second syllogism points towards, what could also be described as 'metaphor', and according to Bateson, a central dynamic at play in nature. The structure of this syllogism differs considerably from the 'Syllogism in Barbara' (Bateson 1988), where Socrates is placed in a class of those who will die. However the 'Syllogism in Grass' (Bateson 1988) does not deal with classes in the same manner. "The grass syllogism is concerned with the equation of predicates, not of classes and subjects of sentences, but with the identification of predicates. Dies – dies, that which dies is equal to that other thing which dies." (Bateson 1991 p. 241)

The Barbara syllogism could never be much use in a biological world until the invention of language and the separation of subjects from predicates. In other words, it looks as though until 100,000 years ago, perhaps at most one million years ago, there were no Barbara syllogisms in the world, and there were only Bateson's kind, and still the organism got along all right. They managed to organise themselves in their embryology to have two eyes, one on each side of a nose. They managed to organise themselves in their evolution. So there we shared predicates between the horse and the man, which zoologists today call homology. (Bateson, 1991 p. 241)

1.2.6 GLOSSARY – OTHER RELEVANT SYSTEM-THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

1.2.6.1 Emergence

Emergence happens, if “durch mikroskopische Wechselwirkung auf einer Makroskopischen Ebene eine neue Qualitaet entsteht, die nicht aus den Eigenschaften der Komponenten herleitbar (kausal erklarbar, formal ableitbar) ist, die aber dennoch allein in der Wechselwirkung der Komponenten besteht.” (Krieger 1996, p. 31) (*a new quality is created through interaction on a microscopic level. A quality that is not deductible out of the component's properties (causally explainable, formally deductible), but still only exists through the interaction of the components.*) Systems are often seen in the context of ‘emergent orders’ - in the direction of evolution, thereby portraying a hierarchical order. ‘Simple’ systems turn to system-elements of higher order systems, which again turn to system-elements of even higher systems and so on. Although it might be a naïve and simplistic view of the world, to us, the observers there are recognisable ‘phenomena’ within the wider order of things. As Bertalanffy pointed out “the question of hierarchical order is intimately connected with those of differentiation, evolution, and the measure of organisation (...). In the last resort (...) hierarchical order and dynamics may be the very same.” (Bertalanffy

1969, p. 28) Bertalanffy (1969) proposed an informal survey of Main Levels in the Hierarchy of Systems, something that according to him laid no claim on logical rigor, but illustrated clearly the idea of a system-hierarchy in the direction of evolution.

1.2.6.2 Adaptation

All biological systems have the capability to adapt. However, such adaptive change can take many forms “such as response, learning, ecological succession, biological evolution, cultural evolution, etc., according to the size and complexity of the system we choose to consider.” (Bateson 2000, p. 274)

Structural flexibility or the ability of the system to change its structure it commonly called ‘adaptation’. Ashby’s model for adaptiveness is, roughly, that of step functions defining a system, i.e., functions which, after a certain critical value is passed, jump into a new family of differential equations. This means that, having past a critical state, the system start off in a new way of behaviour. Thus, by means of step-functions, the system shows adaptive behaviour by what the biologist would call trial and error: it tries different ways and means, and eventually settles down in a field where it no longer comes into conflict values of the environment. (Bertalanffy 1969, p. 121)

The concept of adaptation however is controversial in the field of system-theory, as a system that changes its structure, automatically changes its environment, which it defines. Therefore the term of *structural coupling* is preferred to describe the adjustment of two or more systems to each other.

1.2.6.3 Learning, Evolution, Self-Organisation

The surfacing of a system’s new behavioural patterns can be described as ‘learning’ as long as the organism’s organisation itself has not changed (Krieger 1996). Otherwise we talk of evolution. Evolution occurs when a system transforms its own organisation. Evolution is based on the notion of self-organisation, when

subsystems cooperate in such a way that the structure of the meta-system is becoming more complex. “Also liegt die Richtung der Evolution in die Selbstorganisation and Emergenz immer komplexerer Systeme” (Krieger 1996, p. 33) (*hence the direction of evolution is the one of self-organisation and emergence of ever more complex systems.*)

1.2.7 SUMMARY

System Theory, Cybernetics and cybernetic epistemology have been developed out of an interdisciplinary inquiry into ‘the pattern which connects’ (Bateson 1979). These fields of knowledge propose models and metaphors for the understanding of the underlying structures, dynamics and processes of matter’s organisation. Although an inquiry can be highly focused on particular aspects of life, i.e., the behaviour of flocks of birds, System Theory remains a holistic approach to viewing the world based on the ancient notion of a continuous flow of matter and energy in which certain dynamics constitute systems, in Bateson’s terms, irrespective of whether these systems are a crab, a lobster, a primrose, an amoeba or a human being (Bateson 2002). ‘Open system’ is an often-used expression of System Theory. It fosters the belief that in the holistic worldview no system can be ‘truly closed’, every system is part of, and taking part in, the continuous flow. ‘Open’ is used moreover to describe systems that are ‘open’ towards their environment, whilst being organisationally closed; maintaining themselves, and their identity, in the flow of matter through means such as metabolism. Organizationally (or operationally) closed systems maintain their internal organization and are able to do that even when they exchange matter and, or information with their environment insofar these exchanges

are admissible. 'Closure' does not mean insulation or isolation. It can be presumed that open systems, in the most refined description, are systems that fulfil all criteria of Mind as outlined by Bateson.

This research proposes choreography as an aesthetic enquiry into patterns, dynamics and their consequences. Hence insights as offered by Cybernetics and Bateson carry fundamental implications for the development of this aesthetics.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This practice-based research project applied the creative act of choreography as an aesthetic base to enquire into patterns and processes of life. It merged system-theoretical writings and philosophies with practical rigor and personal expression to create works of art that in turn provided aesthetic knowledge. Every choreographic work, once created, formed the basis for further developments.

In each instance, the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation. (Schoen 1983, p.68)

As the author was continuously building on the research's outcome choreographic methodologies crystallised over time. Some aspects of this development have been disregarded, adjusted and manifested along the way. Choreographic principles, concepts and ideas emerged through a much wider process of mutation and evolution of ideas, forming new knowledge for further investigation. Knowledge as produced by this research is not necessarily explicit and can not be reduced to simple instructions and descriptions. "It seems right to say that our knowing is in our actions." (Schoen 1983, p.49)

1.3.2 A PROJECT OF EXPLORATION IN METAPHORS

Although it had originally started with an exposition of the author to establish choreography as an autonomous discipline, the journey that lies behind the formulation of this research project was one of exploration, of surprising openings, serendipity and, at times, submission to the unknown. Sometimes the answers came after the question, and sometimes the questions after the answers, very often there were no answers, but never no questions. Although formulated many times for calmness sake, there was no following of a consistent plan at most stages, nevertheless the research was all but plan-less. This process is well described by communication theorists McLuhan and Nevitt:

Beyond Exposition for Exploration

Civilised, rationally educated people expect and prefer to have problems described and analysed sequentially. They try to *follow* your argument to a conclusion. They expect the conclusion to be your *point of view*, illustrative of your *values*. In contrast to the method of exposition is the method of exploration. This begins by the admission of ignorance and difficulties. Such statements will tend to be a tentative groping. The blind man's cane picks up the relation of things in his environment by the quality of resonance. His tapping tells him what objects are adjacent to his stick. If his stick were connected to any of these objects, he would be helpless so far as orientation was concerned. This is always the plight of the logical method. It is useless for exploration. Its very strength makes it irrelevant. "Proof" of sanity is available only to those discharged from mental institutions. (McLuhan & Nevitt 1972, p.8; italics in original)

In this case, the author's 'cane' was a perceptual dimension, 'perceiving' patterns, movement, connections and their regularities and dynamics, not only on an abstract, mathematical basis, but on an embodied, integrated and intuitive one. This 'tool' for exploring the deeper workings of mind and nature had developed over time, in the course of a thorough practice of dance coupled with the curiosity of examining the craft of choreography beyond the borders of a stage and a deep multi-disciplinary

interest in patterns and processes of life. Seven years of practice based-research were relying on, at times, poetic explorations into movement. Rational logic had been a poor model most of the time, especially when it came to gather new ground for experience, insight and knowledge. This had to be done by following pathways of the unknown, leaving formulated questions behind and adopting a strategy of ‘action and metaphor’, manoeuvring life in modes of metaphors, as outlined by Bateson in his ‘Syllogism in Grass’, via subjective perception and simultaneous creation.

And it became evident that metaphor was not just pretty poetry, it was not either good or bad logic, but was in fact the logic upon which the biological world had been built, the main characteristic and organizing glue of this world of mental process which I have been trying to sketch for you in one way or another. (Bateson 1992, p. 241)

1.3.3 DARKNESS AND TRADITION

Although explanatory devices are at all times common building blocks for human knowledge production, this research attempted to avoid generalising assumptions in favour of immediate and subjective exploration of ‘the vast darkness’ (Bateson, 1991):

All science is an attempt to cover with explanatory devices – and thereby to obscure – the vast darkness of the subject. It is a game in which the scientist uses his explanatory principles according to certain rules to see if these principles can be stretched to cover the vast darkness. But the rules of the stretching are rigorous, and the purpose of the whole operations is really to discover what parts of the darkness still remain, uncovered by explanation. (Bateson 1991, p. 49)

Every field of human knowledge production has its very own tradition of explanations. Of course, in choreography as

in any cultural field it is not possible to be original except on a basis of tradition. Conversely, no one in the line of cultural contributors repeats except as a deliberate quotation, and the unforgivable sin in the cultural field is plagiarism. The interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness seems to be just one more example (...) of the interplay between separateness and union. (Lawrence quoting Fulton, p. 140)

Here is another, unavoidable dilemma in the creation of new knowledge. Insofar, that such newfound knowledge can only be assessed in regards to what is already known.

This work was not meant to be built upon a somewhat linear history of Western dance and choreography, but has to be placed into a much wider epistemological discourse.

The research process had increasingly grown oblivious to extend the field of choreography and dance from within an accepted tradition, but felt responsible to where one's ideas and experiences led. Over the period of research the emphasis of enquiry shifted from an emphasis on traditions based on dominant modes of cultural production, such as theatrical and performative conventions, to one of multi-disciplinary ideas marked by system-theoretical insight, at times separating, consciously or not, the choreographic practice from traditions in the field of dance-creation, but simultaneously uniting it with a wealth of inter-disciplinary ideas.

Therefore, the author is aware that this work stands in contrast to the dominant public and academic discourse in choreography and dance. This practice-based exploration has been actively tracing a different tradition than the discipline's very own historical circumstances, in an attempt to draw from radically subjective experiences, uncovering a hidden matrix of connections with other fields of knowledge, a new, and yet, somewhat other, traditional context. However, once there had been some form of descriptive outcome, the author made the effort to contextualise such knowledge in the dominant historic tradition of choreography and dance.

1.3.4 METHOD

To some extent, in pursuit of new knowledge, the methods applied in this practical and theoretical explorations are not necessarily distinguishable processes. They are united by an ambivalent attitude towards rigorous planning and building with a clear, pre-fabricated image of the product in mind. Planning forward is, at times, stuck in the limits of one's projection of possible future events, which in fact is mostly out-foxed by the arriving present, restricting one's movement or thoughts in the present not according to the actual situation but being caught in the dichotomy between a future imagined in the past that didn't arrive. Projected ideas need to be flexible to be adjusted at all times, redefined or to be abandoned and maintained by choice and circumstance and not by fear of change or plain habit. This approach was key to the formulation of this thesis, whether it had been adopted by dancers in productions such as 'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind' avoiding pre-mature manifestations in performance, or by the choreographer attempting to find new ground tapping his cane in the form of existing knowledge against the vast darkness of the unknown.

At many occasions the author consciously avoided to construct a picture of one's artifacts before they were actually to be observed or experienced. The strategy was to follow where the exploration of ideas took one's mind, and not to safely stay within the confined compound of one's imagination. This approach included long periods of rest, distance from the subject, allowing ideas to be integrated subconsciously into one's larger realm of aesthetic knowledge, only to reappear in the author's consciousness in a somewhat altered form. Just like the choreographic work, the research process as such, was a manifestation of the methods applied in artistic

creation and included the patient growing of knowledge through constant reflection and action. As soon as the ideas took ‘Gestalt’ during this process, whether in form of framework of performance or theoretical extensions of the field of choreography and dance, a process of description commenced, formulating and integrating the newfound concepts and ideas into the larger context of existing knowledge.

Instead of following a pre-constructed path laid out in a clear exposition, the method applied in this research project saw the need to construct new, as well as apply existing tools, abstract vehicles for practical and theoretical explorations. These tools were flexible frameworks of reference from which to negotiate unknown territories. Sometimes they were constructed by tradition, as in form of a studio or theatre-stage, or by new theoretical structures, forming concepts that led to new experiences once followed. Throughout the research period the author distinguished between three modes for knowledge generation and distribution – the subjective, the conversational and the collective.

1.3.4.1 Subjective

A radical subjective approach to experiencing the world, relying on one’s very own perceptual and cognitive abilities, has been a pre-requisite of this enquiry. This study had been driven by subjective modes of awareness and creation. Foremost by the many months, that had been spent in a studio or on a stage, and although not necessarily concerned with questioning the functions and conventions of their traditional meaning in the field of performance, the stage as well as the studio has been appropriated to the author’s means. The stage initially became a testing-ground

in regards to the government and steering of movement. Later in the process the stage turned into a laboratory for the governing of existing mind-dynamics and processes, and finally, during the final phases of this research, the stage as well as the studio were treated as an open ground, a 'clearing' for thought to manifest itself in free association. Throughout the process of creation, which simultaneously had been the most fertile time of research, pencil drawings supported the process of thought. Initially these drawings were maps of the choreography, timelines with notes of instructions or arbitrary symbols delineating dynamics (Appendix 13). From being representational maps these drawings slowly became a manifestation of the actual choreography, providing an additional testing-ground for choreographic ideas.

There was no obvious, logical connection between the drawn and the resulting dance, however, the process of drawing helped to emulate and thereby shape the choreographic processes on an ongoing basis. Throughout the research the author, according to instructions adapted from those given to the dancers, produced hundreds of drawings. The experiences perceived and collated during these studio-based periods of creation were integrated during periods of reflection and conversation.

1.3.4.2 Conversational

Dialogue had been another invaluable process for knowledge production. Although to some degree obvious, the on-going contextualising and comparing of subjective experience with the ones of others, forms new concepts and ideas on an on-going basis, which are 'owned' by neither but are emerging out of the extension of individual mental patterns in dialogue with others. The author engaged in numerous

conversations with many of the writers and artists quoted throughout this thesis, especially with Gordon W. Lawrence, William Forsythe, Peter Harries-Jones, Fred Steier and Steve Valk.

1.3.4.3 **Collective**

The collective mode of knowledge production and distribution saw the creation of larger communication structures, providing the author with a large pool of knowledge to contextualise and develop his own work. For this purpose ‘Framemakers-Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change’ was established, a series of projects promoting discourse in the field of choreography and Cybernetics. This series enquired into a world understood in terms of relations, order and ecologies and was hosted by Daghdha Dance Company between 2005 and 2008 in Limerick, Ireland and hosted numerous scholars, artists, scientists and politicians to extend the field of choreography, contributing greatly to the development of a more rigorous approach to the philosophical, theoretical as well as practical implications of this research.

However, the above distinctions of knowledge production are only relevant for means of descriptions and the three methods did not have a separate existence, as dialogue was the basis of the collective and the subjective had always been present.

1.3.4.5 Suspending Action

A method that has not been mentioned so far, but played a central role in the formulation and evolution of ideas, has been the initial theme for the ‘Framemakers’ symposium: ‘We have to stop doing what we are doing’. Without suspending habitual modes of creation a new and reflective position could not have been possible. One has to stop what one is doing in order to gain distance, a critical stance, to re-define one’s practice. Therefore, for long periods throughout this research project the author did not engage in choreographic production at all, taking the time to learn from completely different fields of human knowledge production (such as sociology, physics, anthropology, theology, philosophy), which in turn re-contextualised, reinvented and complemented his choreographic practice as well as facilitated particularly productive periods of creation.

1.3.5 SUMMARY

Whether in conversation with others, in moments of personal reflection or studio-based workings, as the research progressed the author subscribed ever more to the ‘logic of poets and schizophrenics’ (Bateson, 1992), driven by deeper workings of metaphors whilst attempting to avoid engineering methods of creation. In light of cybernetic epistemology such engineering modes, due to their reductionist nature, are not conducive when thinking about living things. Still, during intense periods of creation and perception, one’s logic carved out regularities, dynamics and patterns were rationally formulated as indicators of much wider processes. To deduct a single element within a territory, the desire to map it and hence taking it out of its immediate

context as an isolated phenomenon, is an act of reductionism, and at times created contradictions within the wider approach of this research project, which was to immerse oneself into interconnectedness, interdependence and immediacy in the present. This stirred an ongoing and unavoidable conflict within this research: gaining methodology through reductions, that might promise desired results when dealing with a larger ecology oneself is part of, and simultaneously the aspiration to give up this very methodology in favour of radical subjective experiences. Such dilemmas are well stated by Hillmann: “for even while one part of me knows the soul goes to death in tragedy, another is living a picaresque fantasy, and the third engaged in the heroic comedy of improvement.” (Hillmann 1991, p. 81) As for the author, one part of him knew that in an interdependent world everything must run its course, another part of his engaged in the aesthetic pleasures of experiencing and manoeuvring patterns in movement, yet still another part remained convinced of the possibility of choreographing ‘improved’ conditions for living. This research project has not overcome this dichotomy; it is simply pointed out and acknowledged.

Concrete realities do not exist. I will refuse to choreograph institutions into being, which bury fruitful uncertainty beneath false or sterile assumptions, the lazy dogma of reductionist thinking, illusory perceptions or presuppositions. (...) Like dust from the feet of the traveller at the end of his journey, it is from the mucky ground of being that I bring new form to the surface, to imbue life, to create a blossom, to realise potential and flirt with infinity. Perpetuity is a fleeting glimpse: true stability embraces ebb and flow. As an architect of the invisible, I, like you, set entities into relationship with one another. Sometimes this involves no more than the reshuffling of context; enough 're-framing' for an idea-body to get unstuck, rough and tumble, from its habitual pattern of circumstance and repetition. (...)

I no longer see in pictures. Patterns are everywhere. They are real. In between, ephemeral but real. That's why I refer to choreography as the invisible art, art of the invisible. After all, it is immanent in relations, force-fields, attractors of all sorts, not frozen into any subject or object. Choreography is everywhere, always, in everything. I no longer see in pictures. I see movement and interrelation, exchange and communication between bodies and ideas. What is the difference between the concepts of body and idea? Isn't an idea a body, when passed on in its entirety? Isn't a body an idea that has been strong enough to prevail long enough to be perceived? ...to become solid, if described in matter. What rule-based choreography is immanent in the playing out of chemical processes that beget and become life? And what choreographs making love? Can there be a more aesthetic dance than that which extends two selves, wrapping one mind-body around the other, bringing the other to life in a hand, your hand. A choreography of evolution, an intricate order of two people in relation to each other, an ether of mental fabrics being pulled into a dance not prescribed anywhere - a conglomerate of needs, desires, submission, humility, grace, generosity, tenderness, energy, vitality - an immanent, nameless set of relations within nature, an authorless phenomenon usually made subject to and instantly destroyed by our will-to-order. What frames all these movement processes: mating dances, ant-colonies, evolution? The subtle pathways, attractors, fields? The pulling of movement out of mannerisms of mind into time and space? These choreographies surpass the capacity of any choreographer, any conscious creator.

(Klien, Valk, Gormly 2008)

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, the meaning of the term ‘Choreography’ has undergone a series of changes. This chapter outlines the broad conceptions of choreography and discusses the basic premises underlying this research, before examining the author’s choreographic practice and its theoretical implications, charting the development of choreographic methodology and theory between 2001 and 2006.

‘*Choreography*’ appears in its first variation in 1589, the Jesuit priest Thoinot Arbeau published his dance manual ‘Orchesographie (the writing, *graphie*, of the dance, *orchesis*)’ (see Lepecki 2006 p. 6). The actual term ‘choreography’ however is a linguistic fabrication from the Greek words ‘choreia’ meaning ‘dance’ and ‘graphein’ meaning ‘to write’, coined by French Balletmaster R.A. Feuillet in his seminal work ‘Chorégraphie ou l’art de d’écrire la danse’ in 1701 (Lee, 2002), indicating that the original connotation of the term was describing the act of dance-notation - a meaning that was still being used in the beginning of the 20th century. The word itself, a flawed linguistic construct, implies ancient Greek roots, which it never had. Not unimportantly, as Lepecki points out, the term signifies an inbuilt relationship between ‘the writing’ and ‘the dance’, an assumption that is still ever-present in various positions on choreography. “Compressed into one word, morphed into one another, dance and writing produced qualitatively unsuspected and charged

relationalities between the subject who moves and the subject who writes.” (Lepecki 2006, p. 7) Unfortunately, the literal notion, in opposition to a metaphoric or poetic one, of ‘writing of the dance’ still underlies various preconceptions of choreography today. Such literal understanding promotes an inbuilt power-structure, with the traditional choreographer being the writer of movement, the author of the dance, and furthers the problematic presumption that dance can be linguistically constructed by following some logical and rational syntax. ‘Writing’ within this research refers to a choreographic act that essentially assumes dance to be a choreographer’s ‘writeable’ subject.

However, over the centuries the term has also undergone a considerable evolution and expansion. ‘Choreography’, in its contemporary use, is broadly seen as the artistic practice of creating dance-works (as outlined and described by Humphrey 1959; Ellfeldt 1974; Blom and Chaplin, 1982; Bremser 1999). The diverse application and connotation of the term makes it difficult, if not impossible, to talk about ‘choreography’ as a singularity. ‘Choreography’ has been used in various ways to describe a wide array of actions that are either loosely related to dance and movement creation and/or to the act of ordering, whether developed from within a dance tradition (Klien and Mortimore 1999, Forsythe 2003) or from within numerous other disciplines such as biology (Fulton 1984), anthropology (Keeney 1983) and business management (Senge 1999). This research, through practical and theoretical exploration has bound together various descriptions of choreography, and developed a body of practice-based work that unfolds choreography as an aesthetics of change.

2.2 DESCRIPTIONS OF CHOREOGRAPHY

This research is based on four premises and although their individual validity is generally accepted, no attempt has been made to the author's knowledge to tie those ideas together. These premises are:

1. choreography can operate outside the context of dance-practice as a technique and form of knowledge dealing with its own independent concerns, which can only be explored via appropriate fields of engagement;
2. choreography can be understood as the creative practice of arranging movement in time and space;
3. choreography can be used as a metaphor for dynamic processes, whether physically expressed or not;
4. choreographic methodologies and practice can be applied to other areas of human knowledge production.

The first premise argues for the development of an autonomous art form arising from a dance-context. Choreography has been emancipated from the art of dance and has the potential to operate outside of dance, if rigorous practical research by experienced choreographers is undertaken to reveal its very own, new field of engagement.

Choreografie braucht keine Tänzer. Choreografie und Tanzen sind zwei total verschiedene Disziplinen. Traditionell wird Choreografie hauptsächlich mit Tanz assoziiert, jetzt wird sie unabhängiger. So muss sie nun zwar nicht unbedingt mit der professionellen Ausführung einer Idee zusammenhängen,

aber die Idee selbst muss stark genug sein, um Körper in organisierte oder kategoriale Bewegung zu bringen. (William Forsythe 2003)

(Choreography does not need dancers. Choreography and Dancing are two totally different disciplines. Traditionally, one associates Choreography mainly with dance; nowadays it is becoming more autonomous. At the present time, it (choreography) doesn't have to be connected to the professional execution of an idea, but the idea itself has to be strong enough to bring the body into an organized or categorical movement.)

Emancipation from dance brings with it liberation from the stage. 'Ich denke nicht mehr an eine Bühne. Sie ist ein obsoletes mentales Modell.' (William Forsythe 2003)

('I no longer think about the stage. It is an obsolete mental model.')

Choreography is no longer 'about' dance, no longer connected to simple 'step-making, nor is it necessarily in need of a stage – it is, as Forsythe outlines, an idea strong enough to organise movement; the *idea* itself is the creative act of arranging movement in time and space. A number of traditional approaches to choreography are based on the idea of dance being "the use of energy in space and time" (Ellfeldt 1974, p. 14), suggesting that choreography is the arrangement of this energy in space and time. Introducing System Theory and cybernetic knowledge to the creative act of ordering, the process as well as the resulting work are transformed into a dynamic one, shifting the notion of choreography towards a form of art that not only deals with the creation and manipulation of systems of rules organising the evolving arrangement of energy, but also does so in a non-deterministic, open way.

The second premise, choreography as the arrangement of movement in time and space (Ellfeldt 1974) is opening a discourse on order and movement. What is order? How is it achieved? What is movement? The body as such is not necessarily the focus of such choreographic inquiry. System Theory, Cybernetics, information

theory, energy flow and mind dynamics, such as outlined by Gregory Bateson (Bateson 2002, p. 85-119), become relevant and indispensable fields for choreographic theory and practice.

The third starting-point of this research project, the term's open denotation, has led choreography to be considered as a metaphor for dynamic constellations of any kind, consciously created or not, self-organising or superimposed. It can become a metaphor for order observed in biological systems, for exchange of forces in the world of physics and the interaction of elements in the world of chemistry; a metaphor for a process with an observable or observed embodied order, no longer exclusively in need of a human creator, existing only for us to witness and/or interfere with. Thereby, choreography is emerging as a way of seeing the world. A world full of interaction, relationships, constellations, dependencies, arrangements, and proportionalities. "At this order (...), conversations, human sexuality, family dinners, and international conflict are organized according to the rules of choreography that govern (i.e., pattern) their interactional themes." (Keeney 1983, p. 40)

The three basic premises outlined above accumulate in the fourth point, namely, that perceiving the world with a deeply developed sensibility for interconnectedness and interdependence can form a new choreographic practice, a practice whose methodologies of intervening, steering, offering and (re-)arranging can be applied to other fields of human knowledge production as well as human interaction. It is a way of seeing the choreographer within the context of an existing, larger, ongoing choreography of physical, mental, and social structures, whereby the

choreographer acts as a strategist negotiating intended change within his/her environment.

Collating and merging these four points above into one discourse informed and contextualised by System Theory and Cybernetics presents a paradigm shift of thinking about choreography: The act of choreography is no longer bound into the historical context of dance but, as outlined in this and the next chapter, emerges as the creative act of setting the conditions for something to happen, proposing the role of the choreographer as the navigator, provider, negotiator and architect of a fluid environment he/she himself/herself is part of.

2.3 CHOREOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

2.3.1 BACKGROUND

This research has been shaped by, and is embodied in, the development of a number of choreographic works, each presenting a step towards, and a development of, new choreographic methodologies and concepts informed by System Theory and Cybernetics, and later by Bateson's notion of 'Ecology of Mind' – a view of the world that points towards the unfathomable, aesthetic dimension of reality in opposition to a rationalised formulation of it.

The author's early choreographic work, prior to the undertaking of this research-period, was marked by passionate discontent with existing dominant methods of creation in the field of dance. It seemed as if a dance-piece, once fixed, had no life of its own, but was created to be performed within a strict time frame, from the beginning to the end with preferably no perceivable variations between the different manifestations (performances) of the dance. Such modes of dance-creation meant that pieces were mainly composed with inflexible time-, space -, and action-structures. The dance was written – engraved and enslaved - into a virtual pocket of time and space, apparently repeatable forever, whilst being lamented for "being doomed to forgetfulness as soon as it is performed." (Lepecki 2006, p. 124) This dichotomy, lamenting mortality of the dance, whilst trying to preserve it as a set framework appeared absurd. These rigid structures for dance went very much against the author's early impressions of dance. Why can the structure not embody movement itself and thereby enable and support the act of dancing? In the early 1990s, several

theatrical trends, such as dance-theatre, neo-classical ballet and a number of individual choreographic methods were prevalent on Europe's stages, such as the choreographic work of Pina Bausch, Matthew Bourne, Siobhan Davies, William Forsythe, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jiří Kylián and Mark Morris to name a few. However, whether determined by step-by-step creation or loose improvisation during the process of creation, the final result was pre-dominantly presented in a fixed and linear manner, ideally repeatable with as little variation as possible. Yet the field of improvisation provided an alternative approach to dance and choreography, resisting the methods of traditional choreographic practices, which celebrated the authority of the choreographer in the decision-making process and provided alternative options, such as 'structural improvisation' (Keefe 2003) or 'instant composition' (Lycouris 1996). The focus of the early research, however, was not on 'instant composition' or other forms and approaches to improvisation (such as outlined by Banes 2003, Cooper Albright and Gere 2003, Paxton 1987 and 1994, Kostellanetz 1968), but moreover zoomed in on the promise of choreographing complex, yet predictable, rule-based constructs, 'fabrics of relations'. Such pre-determined frameworks for action, initially aimed to extend and add flexibility to the existing choreographic repertoire of setting dances by introducing flexible, yet exact procedures for governing movements.

2.3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF RULE-BASED, NON-LINEAR CHOREOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS

As a reaction to the common practice in the field of choreography, to predetermine the structure, the series of events and actions, prior to its performance, a simple system was developed by the author which, with the help of a computer programme (Klien, Mortimore 1999; Appendix 1), presented visually encoded dance sequences to a dancer in real-time. These visual cues were transmitted to the dancer on stage via monitors and their follow-up was determined according to certain algorithms. The final arrangements of the modular choreographic system (simple linear dance sequences re-presented as colour blocks moving across the monitors) were depending on a number of pre-set parameters and algorithms and/or external input, such as sensors hidden on stage, allowing the dance to trigger certain states of the systems. The dancer was presented with new constellations of the dance sequences every time he/she performed the work. Although the computerised scripting had been a central aspect in the creation of the early work and the integration of digital tools seemed indispensable in the quest for more complex ordering procedures, the computer was later substituted for a different approach to the creation of choreographic systems by further exploring and engaging the dancer's mental capabilities.

Out of the initial research, the author in collaboration with Davide Terlingo, Nicholas Mortimore and Volkmar Klien (then working under the collective 'Barriedale Operahouse') developed the term 'non-linear choreography' (Klien, Mortimore 1999). As mentioned earlier, traditional approaches to choreography are

based on the idea that dance is “the use of energy in space and time” (Ellfeldt 1974, p. 14), a notion suggesting that choreography is the arrangement of this energy in space and time. The arranged energy is presented as a choreographic structure - the work. Linear choreography is thus characterized by

- a) no active, purposeful interaction with an environment and
- b) no flexible interaction between its various subsystems.

Characteristic of such work is often that all of its elements are presented in fixed pre-defined relations to each other. Linear choreographic works are characterised by their repeatability and the linear succession of its elements (Duet B following Duet A).

Non-linear choreography, however, is characterised by internal dynamic procedures and undetermined succession of its elements, meaning the next state of a system evolving is not fully specified by the combination of the system inputs and its current states. Non-linear choreography not only deals with the creation and manipulation of systems of rules organising the evolving arrangement of energy, but it also does so in a non-deterministic manner.

The rise of complexity theory in the realm of popular science sparked an ongoing series of choreographic enquiries throughout the dance world into the field of emergence and ‘non-linearity’. Artists such as Ivar Hagendoorn (Hagendoorn 2002) and Jane Turner (Turner 2000-2004) experimented with emergent patterns in dance improvisation and choreography. Although adding certain elements to existing choreographic practice, the work did not aim to re-contextualising the field of choreography. None of the proposed work and practices rigorously traced the

implications of such knowledge, nor did it formulate a comprehensive methodology of non-linear choreographic practice.

Later in this research project, the initially prevalent term ‘non-linear’ was marginalised to avoid non-linear processes being ‘sub-categorised’ within the field of choreography by simply being perceived to add a facet to existing ‘linear’ practices, rather than being accepted as valid alternative of thinking about choreography altogether. After all, according to System Theory, linear is a sub-set of non-linear and not vice versa. The principles of non-linear choreography have nevertheless been absorbed into the later developments of the author’s choreographic methodologies.

2.3.2.1 The Language Metaphor

The comparison of initial non-linear choreographic processes to language, constructed out of words and grammar, was helpful during the early stages of research for works such as ‘Nodding Dog’ (Klien, 2001) and ‘Duplex’ (Klien, 2002), as the dancer knew all movement-sequences (words) created by him/herself or the choreographer, the choreographer set the relational parameters of the material (grammar) and the custom written computer-software would formulate the sentences in real-time (sentences/script). Through the endless permutations of the final script it became evident to the author that, as anticipated, relational parameters are a key aspect of any choreographic work, just as much, and sometimes more important than the actual movement material itself. The choreographic work of Balanchine for example, his use of strict geometric patterns can be identified by his compositional method alone, even if the actual movement material would be a completely different one, simply by analysing the relational parameters used; something, the field of choreology has been

pursuing for some time in order to examine existing choreographic work (Copeland, 1983). In retrospect, the language metaphor clearly is problematic as it approaches choreography as a linguistic, rational enquiry, in terms of 'writing dance' as opposed to an aesthetic one. Yet, whilst staying within the paradigm of the choreographer as the author of dance (or any complex system), the main influence on the choreographic development during this research-period remained the knowledge and structural insight of Cybernetics.

Keeping with the language metaphor, the research, at some stage, turned its focus to 'grammar' (the relational parameters), rather than 'vocabulary' (the movement) within dance works. A more systematic exploration of relational arrangements was asked for. Early models seemed crude because of their aim to outline the possibilities of non-linear choreographic procedures. Later on, work aimed to transcend the choreographic method itself and focus on the creation of dance-works displaying specific aesthetic qualities impossible to be achieved by traditional choreographic means ('Nodding Dog' 2001, 'Einem' 2002). To facilitate the creation of more complex choreographic system, ideas of System Theory and complexity theory were integrated in the research to develop a systematic methodology for the structural arrangement of pre-existing movement sequences. The manner in which new scientific insights informed this choreographic process was thereby not dissimilar to Merce Cunningham's exploration of order, translating organisational principles into movement in ways that were directly inspired by contemporary concepts and world-views. In Cunningham's work

numerous variables (e.g., the locations of the dancers, the speed with which phrases are performed, the order in which steps are combined, the number of dancers who appear in each sequence) were arrived at not by intuition, instinct, or even the faculty of "taste", but by a wide variety of chance

methods, including: rolling dice, picking cards, tossing coins (...). (Copeland 2004, p.74)

In Cunningham's work the dominating idea of ordering was presented by chaos-theory (Copeland 2004), resulting in the intense application of chance-procedures.

The creation of complex, rather than chaotic, ordering systems required new compositional methods in the process of creation. A 'base-set' of elements for the creation of such open choreographic systems was developed over a year's time (2000), mostly by trial and error. They were inspired by, and loosely based on the vocabulary proposed by scientist John Henry Holland and his step-by-step outline for the modelling of emergent behaviour, meaning that a system displays properties that cannot be found intrinsically within any of the component parts (Holland, 1998). This particular choreographic methodology has been conceptualised for a much wider engagement of the choreographer: to pro-actively create and model complex systems, whether comprised of human beings, symbols or inanimate objects. Although conceived for potentially expansive use in the social sphere, in practical terms, this method was only applied by the author in stage-based works such as 'Nodding Dog' or 'Duplex' (Klien, 2002). The early choreographic act incorporated the selection of relevant features and laws governing the resulting artefact, the choreography. Informed by J.H. Holland's vocabulary, the basic, structural parts of this methodology referred to as 'elements' have been the following:

- Entities/Agents

All systems consist of a network of multiple agents acting in parallel. Each

agent (dancer) finds itself in an environment created by its interactions with other agents in the systems.

Most systems that exhibit emergence can be modelled in terms of the interaction of agents. Agents, which can range from “billard balls’ in a random interactions model to organisms that adapt and learn, offer the quickest route to building models that exhibit emergence. (Holland 1998, p. 225)

- Building blocks/Primitives

Building blocks are given elements such as dance sequences, music phrases, etc., of various lengths and contents out of which a piece is being constructed. The notion that every machine can be constructed out of basic building blocks originates in ancient Greece, where six elementary mechanisms - the lever, the screw, the inclined plane, the wedge, the wheel, and the pulley - have been described. (Holland 1998)

Building blocks range from mechanisms in physics to the way we parse the environment into familiar objects, they proved a way of extracting repeatable features from the perpetual novelty that attends systems exhibiting emergence. (Holland 1998, p. 224)

- Processors

Processors are applied onto building blocks or higher level building blocks (building blocks created through the interaction of lower-level ones). They can be a) filters or b) generators. Filters are rules, transforming existing information (i.e. a turn filter replaces every turn by another action). Generators create new information from existing one via mapping-procedures (e.g. use one parameter/property from your leg movement –such as timing – and translate it into the timing for an arm movement)

- Rules/Triggers

Rules and/or Triggers are all procedures which can be described in a simple algorithm as an IF[] THEN [] operations (This includes starting/stopping procedures). (e.g.: IF[you see someone waving] THEN [start a duet])

They are used “as a way of specifying allowable interactions, particularly between agents. Stimulus-response actions – IF[stimulus] THEN [response] – provide the simplest examples of such usage.” (Holland 1998, p. 223)

The list is only indicative and forms the basis of this choreographic methodology. The choreographic structure results from the intertwining of the elements outlined above. The terms, ‘choreographic genotype’ and ‘choreographic phenotype’ drawn from Langton’s system-theoretical terms *generalised genotype* and *generalised phenotype* (Waldrop, 1992) describe two aspects of work created according to this methodology. Choreographic Genotype depicts the actual structural construct of the work – the encoded instructions. Such code might describe the conditions needed for the system to be played out as well as how the elements, as listed above, are set in relation to each other, directly or indirectly determining their room for movement, development and potential as well as the system’s overall *Gestalt*. The Choreographic Phenotype describes the playing out of the genotype, a set of relations over time. Each playing out is unique, context-dependent and a display of perpetual novelty of the system.

In this research such phenotype is pre-dominantly constituted by a dance-performance, however the actual choreography has a hidden layer that can only be

(partially) perceived over time. Watching a number of choreographic phenotypes unfold, observing regularities as well as change, can offer a glimpse into the structuring choices the choreographer has taken in terms of the choreographic genotype. Thus, the work is no longer perceivable in its entirety as the actual choreography can only be observed in its various manifestations – yet, the changes to the work that manifest themselves over time can offer an additional aesthetic layer to the perception of such work, as can the knowledge of the work’s potential for change. A structure like this is not ‘pre-fixed’, but only manifests itself by being ‘played out’, prior to, or in the very moment of performance.

This outlines a new multi-dimensional model of choreography: The separation and interplay of the system’s code, the genotype, and the system’s actualisation, the phenotype, poses the question to what extent the choreographic work can exist only as a set of relations, without being played-out, performed or observed. It would actualise itself only in thought whenever being communicated and lay dormant till observed.

Rule-based, non-linear choreographic processes as outlined above formed some of the basis for the research’s practical work between 2001-2006, whether the methodology as described above was fully implemented, as in ‘Duplex’ (2002) or formed the starting point for further development in choreographies such as ‘Einem’ (2002) and ‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’ (2005).

2.3.3 CHOREOGRAPHIC PRACTICE 2001-2006

(IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Drawings have been used throughout this research-period to delineate, develop and represent choreographic works. During the later stages of the research these drawings moved away from the notion ‘graphs’, representing some sort of ‘map’ of an actual event, towards becoming the very territory themselves, an alternative manifestation of the actual choreographic process. These images are included to serve as an artistic ‘double-description’ (Bateson 1998), to further the understanding of the developments in and of choreography throughout this research.

2.3.3.1 Nodding Dog (2001)

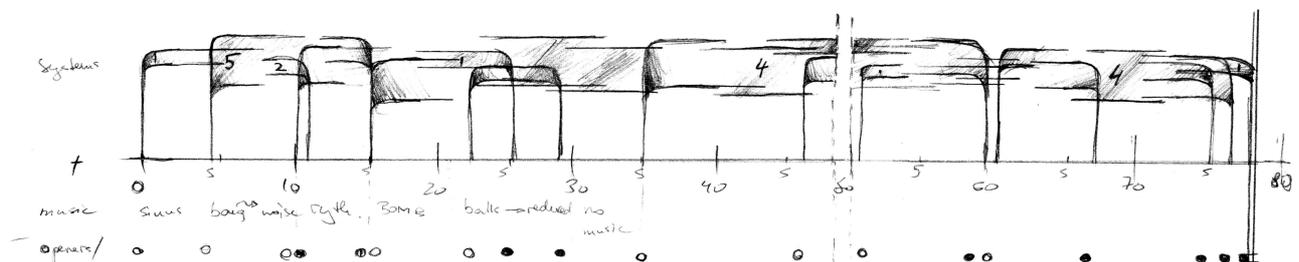


Fig. 2.1: sketch serving as a visual representation and map of the overall choreographic structure (Klien 2001)

Key-developments:

- The first full-evening ballet entirely choreographed utilising real-time, rule-based structuring procedures.
- A non-linear 'fluid' choreographic framework integrating pre-determined, fixed movement-sequences.
- The first integration of a custom-made real-time cueing and structuring device into the larger choreographic process of a full-evening ballet.
- The endeavour to abstract and encode social dynamics into a choreographic structure

Based on the choreographic method outlined above and commissioned by the Volksooper Wien, 'Nodding Dog' was developed as a contemporary ballet piece (co-choreographed with Nicholas Mortimore and Davide Terlingo). Although preceding the official research period of this thesis, the work's outcome is essential in understanding the conceptual and practical development throughout the research project. 'Nodding Dog' presented a 'non-linear' choreographic system that aimed to further explore the potential of complexity- and System Theory for the creative process of choreography. The aim at the outset was to define rules and 'Aktionsrahmen' (radii of action) in which the performers could 'exist' and interact on stage. Thereby 'Nodding Dog' acted as one large adaptive system, composed from a number of dynamic choreographic sub-systems (structures that form entities in themselves), that stood in constant inter-play with each other. The choreography utilised the notion of different persistence:

Some patterns persist only as long as they do not encounter other patterns. Others persist through some interactions, while undergoing dissolution or

transformation in others. Still other persistent patterns interact with only a few other patterns, simply maintaining their form in all other contexts. (Holland 1998, p. 227)

The dancers manoeuvred and moved within a defined rule-based environment. Within this environment they created their relationships from a matrix of possibilities by assessing their own personal current states (and histories) and responded according to the 'open' possibilities, which at times required them to act instinctively (e.g. reacting immediately through engaging in a physical duet) and at other times asked them to develop strategies to progress through the piece (e.g. energy preservation). (credits, additional information and visual documentation: Appendix 2)

The choreographic process was insofar different to computer modelling that none of the dancers were 'pure' agents with simple needs. However, drawing from complexity modelling the aim was to define rules and Aktionsrahmen (radii of action) in which the performers could 'exist' and interact on stage. The choreographers provided the dancers with a pre-defined vocabulary of movement as well as a specific grammar of rules. The final construct depended on a number of factors; the computer signalling the random opening/closure of certain sections (groups of rules); the dancers and their individual decisions of how to react to the rules, the vocabulary as well as their personal interpretation of the music. This application of non-linear choreographic processes allowed 'Nodding Dog' to present a new sequence of events for every single performance. The relationships between the dancers were determined as they unfolded on stage. Each time it was a different *story*, the system running along different paths through its phase-space, depending on the day's meta-structure and the dancers' individual decisions and actions. The audience was not directly aware of the means or actions allowing the dancers to do so, they simply engaged in the physically,

mentally and emotionally challenging manifestations of a process. The unfolding process produced a charged canvas of relations engaged in constant movement and change, pointing the spectator towards a hidden order behind an impenetrable complex structure. ‘Nodding Dog’s custom-written software, a version of the ‘ChoreoGraph’ (Klien and Mortimore 1999), took the form of a visual cue-sheet [Appendix 2], able to configure itself according to certain parameters for each specific performance. The interface was displayed in real-time to dancers on stage, as well as to the conductor, technicians and stage-managers. This cueing mechanism presented a clear development and departure from previous, simple cueing-systems, such as Forsythe’s *DAT-time*. In *DAT-time* a live video feed of the music player’s timer had been transmitted across the stage in real-time, presenting a common timing-tool in reference to specific, pre-arranged cues (Forsythe’s system has been seen in operation by the author during 2000-2003). ‘Nodding Dog’s cue sheet was a progression from this method as it not only displayed the information of cues via a visual interface along a timeline, but was also allowing for cues to be set in algorithmic relations to each other.

The flaws of this specific application and approach to non-linear choreography are very much the problems of any enquiry lacking cybernetic epistemological awareness. It is the creation of an artefact from within a presumed wider reality of perception. In ‘Nodding Dog’ non-linear choreographic methodologies were employed in the building of a larger performance-machinery, a complex compositional network of relations. Nevertheless, at the core lay a mechanistic approach of meshed patterns, grown beyond the integrative capabilities of the choreographers, resulting in what Forsythe would probably refer to as a ‘Baroque

Performance Machinery' (Forsythe, 2006). At that particular stage of this research the choreographic act wasn't primarily an aesthetic one, but following the lead and insights of scientific enquiries. The creative act was one of a world-view still shaped by the assumptions of world-building according to mechanistic principles.

However the resulting products, the performances themselves, were of more aesthetic value than the process itself, offering a concentrated experience of complex, intricate systems shaped within a specific cultural frame, namely an opera house, a ballet and all the conventions that came with it.

2.3.3.2 Duplex (2002)

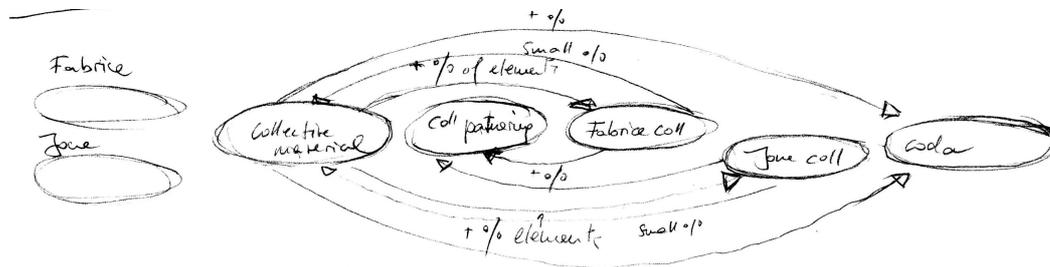


Fig 2.2: a sketch of 'Duplex's choreographic structure (Klien 2002)

Key-developments:

- The seamless integration of a custom-made digital compositional tool into a choreographic process
- The first 'Pas des Deux' to be choreographed following non-linear choreographic methodologies, whilst maintaining the overall *Gestalt* of a Pas des Deux
- The compositional structure in terms of music was synched to the movement, arranged in real-time by the software from pre-recorded music-sequences.
- The excitement over deviations from the script as well as 'errors' in the performance

In 2002, Ballett Frankfurt commissioned the author with another ballet based on this methodology, the duet 'Duplex'. The choreographic (compositional) structure of 'Duplex' was generated by a software tool (programmed by Dr. Nick Rothwell

according to the author's specifications) for every performance anew, chosen out of a collection of predefined elements, namely pre-choreographed movement- and music sequences. First, the computer program organised the elements represented by graphic signals (coloured blocks) according to defined rules into a visual map. These rules expressed a certain proportionality of elements ensuring that an 'artistically and subjectively valid' assembly of elements would be chosen every time. In 'Duplex' the rules implemented in the software assured that movement-material appeared in the 'right' proportionality rather than in a pre-defined order. Although a new structure had been computed for every performance it still was a 'valid' Pas de Deux structure due to the proportionality of element-classes (which were as follows: individual, shared, supported, pauses and duet movement material). During the performance the graphic assembly of elements had been read off monitors by the dancers. They followed the given visual map (Fig.2.3) according to certain sets of laws and freedom, in a partly pre-defined and partly stochastic manner. (credits, additional information and visual documentation of 'Duplex': Appendix 3)

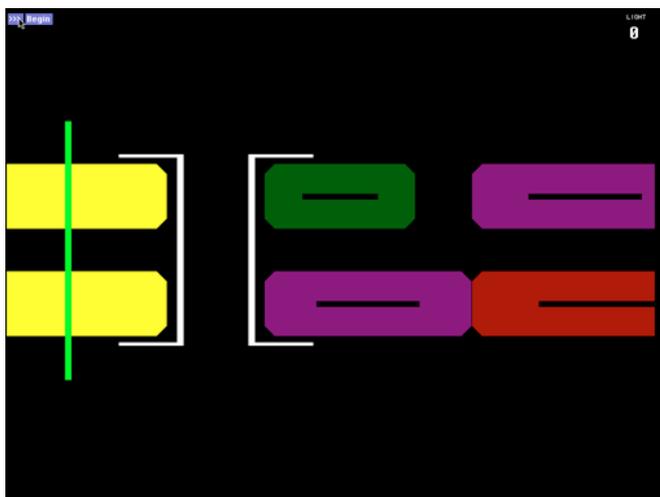


figure 2.3: top line displays elements for dancer A, bottom line for dancer b

Although the use of the computer has previously been of different nature (the structure of 'Duplex' heavily depended on the software whereby 'Nodding Dog's structure was merely supported by a custom-written visual cueing device with specific properties), choreographically the two pieces were constructed very similarly out of a pool of linearly choreographed vocabulary - *step-by-step* preset movement sequences - and a grammar that had been determined by the choreographer. The uniqueness of this approach lay in the flexibility and mutation of the choreographic/compositional structure, the freedom given to the dancers to navigate and react to structural change and the uniqueness of each and every manifestation of the dance works.

Following the study of Bateson's writings, it became apparent to the author that the development of this methodology was conceptually and practically flawed, as this tightly structured approach was exactly what one attempted to overcome at the outset of the research. It seemed that the linearity of things was only reduced to smaller units (from a whole-dance piece to dance-sequences), which were tightly controlled by systems put in place by a creator, the choreographer. As a manifestation of a wider perception of reality, this process seemed too mechanistic and inhumane, constructed out of linear logic, whilst ignoring processes that lay outside human capabilities of deduction and description. In fact, the aspects that really captured the author's, and most of the audience's imagination, was everything that lay beyond and in between the logical construction of such a system: the way dancers responded as humans to a 'sterile' pre-meditated choreographic system; how mistakes were played out on stage, how strategies formed, and many other qualities, for which words do not

exist, surfaced, built up resistance and disappeared. Such choreographic systems seemed able to bring forth truly humane qualities on stage, qualities that were no reflection or construction of a human condition, but the conditions itself. However, they were hidden in between and behind the building blocks, the movement sequences, of the ballet. It became apparent that learning, feeling, adapting, communicating and reacting were the truly interesting aspects, which a further refined method could tease out. Different questions became central to subsequent research. How does one live and express oneself in a pre-meditated system? How does one change a pre-mediated system? What are the conditions for learning? How does one build a system to live in, to communicate with? How do these processes connect? What central dynamics are they governed by and what is their relationship to the context they are embedded in?

2.3.3.3 Frame and Substance

The next step in the development of the choreographic work was to give up the idea of a language-metaphor (as outlined above) in regards to choreography, acknowledging and utilising the entanglement of movement and structure, rather than promoting an idea of their dualistic existence. The language metaphor was useful for the sake of description but limiting in terms of creation as reality. Quoting Korzybski, Bateson reminds us that “Maps are not the territory” (Bateson, 2002, p. 102), and that these two concepts should not be confused. Up to that point the research was focusing on map-making in line with Deleuze’s and Guattari’s demand: “make maps, (...) not drawings.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 24) In ‘Nodding Dog’ and ‘Duplex’ the choreographic structure had been ‘filled’ with movement material that had not necessarily any deeper connections to the framework. This demonstrates the dualistic

approach to choreography and dance the research had taken till then. All emphasis was given to ‘structure’, researching and developing new dynamic organisational processes for dance, whereas ‘matter’ – the dance – was seen as replaceable and a personal expression of the author. The frame and its *filler*, order and matter, compositional structure and dance had no deeply connected relationship. The two aspects of the work were created separately and independently.

At that stage, the creation of the physical dance was not treated as a subject of this research and followed some of the leading, though personalised, trends of its time. In fact the movement material was contrived in a conventional method drawing from the movement repertoire of Ballet and Contemporary Dance. A parallel can be drawn between this problematic and the work of many other choreographers such as Merce Cunningham. Cunningham’s movement technique draws heavily on set ballet movement, and despite the integration of numerous organizational tools, such as isolation and chance (Copeland 2004), the ideas of organisation do not necessarily relate directly to the movement that is governed.

The full focus was given to structuring procedures, exploring new ordering methods, testing out tools, making maps of territories. ‘Duplex’ was the first work to demonstrate, in subtle ways, the absurdity of this dualism. Once the dancers were asked to formulate strategies, express themselves and ‘be themselves’ within a pre-determined, agreed but flexible environment defined by a choreographic structure, the dance, previously strictly subject to top-down governance exhibited its own, at times un-controllable, dynamics. What was previously thought of as a ‘map’ strangely acquired properties of the territory itself, a stage for real-life processes to unfold as

integral, essential part of a work. It no longer seemed that the governing principles between order and matter were one-directional, but the experiences pointed to a much more intricate interplay, between what the author then referred to the phenomena of Frame and Substance.

Subsequently, the aim of the research was to attempt the creation of more territories. This step proceeded with a refocus on the actual movement material, examining how the compositional structure itself can determine movement and vice-versa. The terminology of 'frames' and 'substance' was proposed to discuss the relationship between structure and movement, between organisational patterns and matter. Further processes had to be developed to intertwine the structural frame with an internal substance, making them interdependent, one being the context of the other.

This focus on 'creation of territory' versus the 'creation of maps' delineated, in the experience of the author, a change in the basic manner in which spectators related to the work. A 'choreography as a map', as outlined above, was predominantly read by the spectator as in how the map was constructed, executed, what it stood for, or what emotional responses it triggered within the spectator. However, once the choreography adopted qualities of the territory itself, the reading of the work consequently changed. As the choreographic process unfolded its territory on stage it became, especially later in the research, a realm for personal perception and for re-sensing reality - a subjective expedition for dancers, choreographer as well as the audience into the human condition and its wider reality. The significance of perception in context of this research and the importance of perceptive realms is further discussed in Chapter 3.

2.3.3.4 **Einem...Twelve Minutes Of Her Mind (2002)**

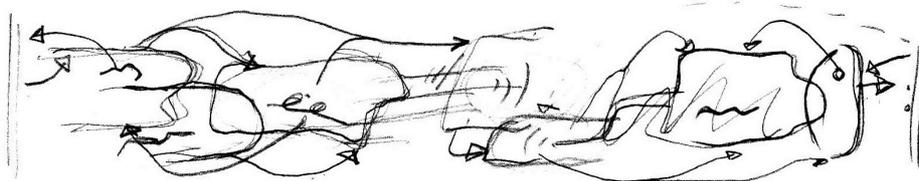


Fig 2.4: a visual sketch of 'Einem's ever-changing choreographic structure (Klien, 2002)

Key-developments:

- An entangled ordering procedure engaging choreographers, dancer and a digital custom-written software.
- The integration of a custom-made digital, algorithmic structuring-device (dynamic, interactive template and cue-sheet) into a choreographic work.
- The wide scope for change in structure and content
- Researching and developing appropriate movement improvisation methodologies that can support a dynamic, rule-based structuring process.
- The insights, that for dance to unfold and emerge it needs to be provided with an un-committed potential for change.
- The incorporation of learning and growth into the work by implementing feedback-mechanism into the choreographic structure

The solo 'Einem...twelve minutes of her mind', commissioned by Ballett Frankfurt, ZKM and TQW (Vienna), was a transitional piece, drawing from structural

processes developed early on as well as focusing on the development of an original movement-system. In 'Einem' the dancer was asked to engage with herself, her own life, history, state and feelings, and, on an ongoing basis explore and perceive patterns of her own being. In line with this exploration of 'self', processes were developed to map certain aspects of herself into physical movement (Appendix 4). Next to a number of other concerns the work aimed for the dancer to examine herself according to a predetermined set of instructions and to embody them according to a fixed mapping-procedure. A system of 'mental projections' was developed to support this process of mapping personal psychological traits, feelings and dynamics into time and space. It consisted of the systematic translation of mental parameters into physical ones, loosely guided and inspired by Lakoff's and Johnson's (1999) writings in 'Philosophy in the Flesh'. (examples of this system are described in the written script of 'Einem': Appendix 4). 'Einem' presented a systematic approach to improvisation, offering the dancer a clear structural template. The choreographer was not involved in setting movement directly nor did he adjust the final manifestations of the movement. An attempt was made to steer clear from criticism and comments that would urge the dancer to re-adjust movement once it was mapped out by the dancer. The work's movement material was a loose combination of 'ad-hoc' movements that crystallised in the moment of performance and movement-sequences, which were developed throughout the period of creation, prior to the performance. In relation to movement, the choreographer's act was located in the development of the mapping procedure for the dancer to create his/her own personal dance.

During this process the concepts of non-linear, rule-based choreography had been advanced to not only deal with wider structural procedures (as in 'Nodding Dog')

and ‘Duplex’) but also with the creation of movement itself. Non-linear, rule-based choreography was now applied to the Frame, the overall structure of the work, as well as to the creation of the Substance, the dance.

‘Einem’ was a stepping-stone in re-thinking the role of choreography, from a discipline concerned with the architecture of non-linear, complex and interactive performance systems to the creations of the conditions and dynamics in time and space for something to happen. It was apparent that the more (mental) space for movement dance was offered, the less it was tempered with in a deterministic manner, the more it adopted characteristics and qualities of dance, as discussed later on in Chapter 4. In this work the frame of the system supported the creation and manifestation of the substance. However, the substance itself had very little effect on the frame (a rule-based, non-linear construct), hence the resulting movement in ‘Einem’ did not have any effect on the properties of the structure. From time to time miscommunication between the choreographer and the dancer, as well as the dancer’s individual interpretation of rules and circumstances, forced the system’s frame out of its pre-arranged pattern and into new, less ‘controlled’ states. These overall, non-scripted nor predicted dynamics added yet another layer to the processes of the piece and the choreographic work that followed would fully embrace and work with these dynamics. (For credits, further information and visual documentation: Appendix 4)

Integral to ‘Einem’ was a custom-written software, which housed a dynamic template determining the overall compositional structure according to algorithms set by the choreographer and the computer programmer. The software acted as a visual cue-sheet during the performance and exhibited various life-like, complex features in

the organisation of content. The dancer manipulated and determined the composition of elements in 'Einem' herself by engaging directly with the software on an on-going basis, but had little to no control in regards to the content's distribution along the timeline. The software was fully incorporated into the choreographic process, creating a dynamic 'buffer-zone' between choreographer and dancer. This enabled the dancer to shape the solo according to her needs, whilst maintaining structural dynamics and relations set by the choreographer, guaranteeing stability of preservation, change and renewal. The computer's role was not at the core of, but integral to the wider choreographic structure.

The computer is only an arc of a larger circuit which always includes a man and an environment from which information is received and upon which efferent messages from the computer have effect. This total system, or ensemble, may legitimately be said to show mental characteristics. It operated by trial and error and has creative character. (Bateson 2000, p. 317)

The computer housed a fairly complex algorithmic mechanism that added a series of layers to the communication and ordering process between a choreographer and a dancer, while contributing to the overarching choreography that was 'Einem', which in the course of time might have exhibited characteristics of mind, by growing, adapting, learning, changing and eroding.

2.3.3.4.1 A Sense of Improvisation

Previous to ‘Einem’ the act of dancing in this research project was very much restricted to a linear-follow up of steps, each determined and shaped directly as ‘written’ by the choreographer. The formation of a dynamic system for moving, rather than pre-configured movement sequences, provided the dancer with a much higher degree of flexibility in terms of decision making, both on- and off-stage. This process offered (mental) space to a moving body in thought and in the dance-historical context can be discussed as improvisation. Although there can be no universally accepted notion of improvisation (Lycouris 2006), and in light of this research as discussed further in Chapter 4, Michelle Heffner Heyes provides a tentative but relevant definition of improvisation to consider various forms (such as postmodern events and flamenco) in the same space.

Improvisation (...) is a citation process. In both flamenco and postmodern traditions, the performer refers to a "map" of possible choices determined by the structure of the form. The "map" must be recognized by a community of participants in order for the improvisation to "make sense", but the "map" does not definitively mark the entire event. Here is the paradox of improvisation: it is neither truly spontaneous nor fully choreographed. (Heffner Heyes 2003, p. 106)

According to this interpretation, improvisations form part of the process of ‘Einem’, as the performer is both citing from a pre-determined map whilst maintaining a spontaneous, instant and intuitive decision-making process. In ‘Einem’ the actual choreography, integrates notion of ‘learning’ on various levels, setting this choreographic methodology apart from many other approaches to improvisation. “The absence of discussion about the learning process in the dialogues surrounding improvisation [is] troubling; any representation of improvisation as a purely spontaneous event effaces the complexity of the decision-making process in the

danced moment.” (Heffner Heyes 2003, p. 107) The choreography of ‘Einem’ embraced and focused on the notion of learning and growth by implementing feedback-mechanism into the choreographic framework. The dancer influenced the choreographic structure according to her experience on an ongoing basis, hence, for the dancer, ‘Einem’ presented an ongoing project of creating her own map, mapping aspects of her life into time and space (‘frame-making’), as well as physically exploring and living that map (‘frame-doing’ (Steier 2005)). The actual choreography provided the dancer with the direction and structural framework for both of these processes. In ‘Im Fett’ these two seemingly separate procedures were fused into one simultaneous process.

2.3.3.5 Im Fett (2003)

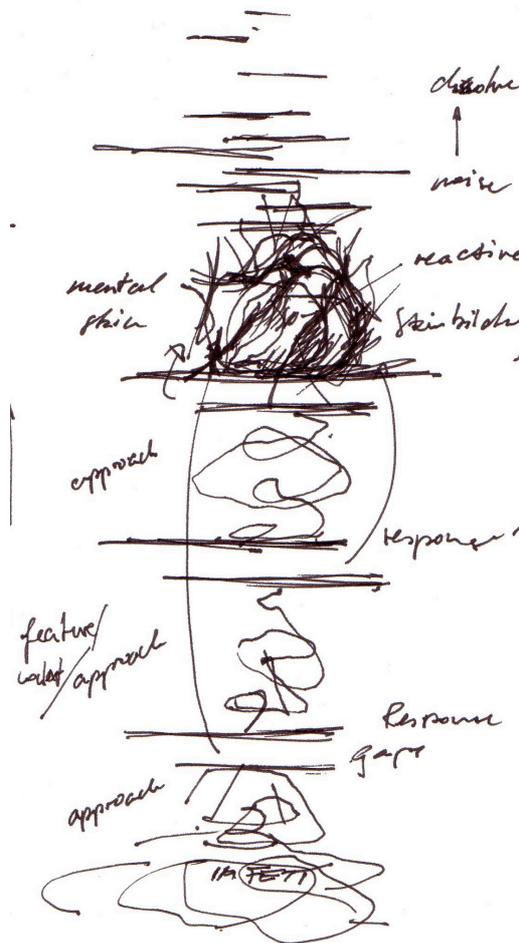


Fig 2.5: Visual map/representation of ‘Im Fett’s structured processes (Klien, 2003)

Key-developments:

- a dynamic, complex choreographic process coded in a written-script
- the full integration of the dancer’s thought processes (mind) into the work
- the provision of an elegant structural cradle for a complex dance of relations to emerge

‘Im Fett’ is a short dance-solo that was later adapted into a duet originally created for Daghda Dance Company, Ireland, in 2004. This seven minute solo incorporated all elements of this research into the field of choreography and Cybernetics till then. ‘Im Fett’s notation is a written script (Appendix 5) that verbally describes and suggests tasks for the performer to execute. No physical movement within ‘Im Fett’ is pre-determined or suggested by the choreographer. The choreography asks the performer to engage with him/herself through a number of processes, constructing a physical and mental model of aspects of ‘self’. The resulting, physically manifested, model – the performance (Appendix 5) – changes in time with the changing mental world of the dancer, depending i.e. on how she/he understands, judges, evaluates or feels about particular aspects of the discourse as outlined by the script of ‘Im Fett’. For the spectator the most perceivable changes from one performance to another happen through the performer’s own changing self, recursively linked and in constant communication with his/her ever-changing context, that way the world around the subject ‘co-choreographs’ ‘Im Fett’. The work is integrating real, rather than recreated, processes of an open system, namely the dancer him/herself. The choreography focuses on the dancer’s own mental-processes by guiding and channelling them into a routine. ‘Im Fett’s structure allows for recursiveness, stochastic processes, paradoxes and even mortality, as (physical and psychological) ideas might grow out of the work and dissolve at a later stage. Learning and forgetting are part of the processes supported by ‘Im Fett’. It offers the dancer a learning environment – a structural realm in which thoughts and actions can settle, be crystallised. Such realms are referred to by the author as ‘choreographic cells’ (see 2.4). Although promoting change and notions of flow, the rules of the template itself do not change, as the script is not altered between performances. The

proportionality of the template, the fabric of relations, stays the same; it is the creation of the choreographer. Further work is needed to allow the choreographic template itself to become subject to change as part of a conscious choreographic act. The choreographer's role is located in terms of 'frame-making', the creation of meaningful conditions for 'frame-doing' (Steier 2005), for 'living', exploration and in this case, dance. The notions of choreography and dance are thereby clearly distinguished by purpose, the choreography creating the conditions for the dance to unfold and the dance exploring and disclosing dynamics of living.

'Im Fett' furthers a holistic approach to dance. Rather than focusing on aspects of the dancer, such as his/her body, the work is a script-based procedure that creates the conditions for the dancer to communicate/express his/her embodied thoughts and minded body. 'Im Fett' aimed to overcome semiotic boundaries between the mental and the physical world, utilising them only as descriptions for discussions, but transcending them in practice. The work, in its creation and manifestations as performances was not aiming exclusively at the body and its various possibilities of permutation, but actively engaged the *whole* human being, primarily aiming at overcoming conventional boundaries, rather than promoting a specific holistic perspective.

2.3.3.6 Sediments of an Ordinary Mind (2004)



Fig 2.6: timeline of ‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’ attempting to capture and map the quality of various processes encoded in the choreography. (Klien 2004)

Key-developments:

- the integration and encoding of learning dynamics into the choreography, enabling the work to ‘manifest itself’, taking Gestalt over time.
- the full integration of dancers’ thought processes (minds) into the work
- incorporation of social dynamics into the work
- the provision of a structural cradle for a complex set of relations for a shared communication between the performers to emerge
- the creation of a field of perception, to observe and explore the emergence of human relationships

‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’ is a choreographic template, a written script, that sets conditions for four individuals to express themselves as well as communicate in movement. A number of procedures were selected to enable the individual’s ‘stream of consciousness’ to be embodied in dance (as in ‘Einem’ and ‘Im Fett’) and a range of ‘watching, integrating, applying’ processes were defined to grow a common, non-verbal, expressive communication between them. The work did not only look at individuals as a system in need of certain conditions to be met for dance to emerge, but also recognised a small group of individuals in communication with each other as a system. Therefore the scope of ‘setting the conditions for dance to unfold’ was now applicable across the scale, and the choreographic act had to provide conditions for both, the individual as well the group, to dance. Bateson would describe the situation the following: “I regard my system and his or her system as together constituting a larger system with some degree of conformability within itself.” (Steier 2005, p. 17) The larger system, needs a certain flexibility, an un-committed potential for change, for it to dance and enable the possibility of change, yet, the sub-systems (the individuals) need to be accommodated within the larger system according to their individual needs. The sense of ongoing intrinsic negotiation, between the individual and the group, was core to this work. For the dancers the stage became a space of negotiation, to achieve maximum individual freedom in choice and expression coupled with a maximum stability of the collective. The shaping dynamics were the *very* dynamics at play at that particular time. Although harnessed and channelled in an artificial construct of relations (as in a stage, a timeframe, some rules and four individuals) they weren’t artificially set or re-created as a re-presentation of some sort. They were the personal and social dynamics at play between the group and the group-member at that particular time. A world that was as real as it was fake, utilising

underlying dynamics of the human condition: learning, faith, love, trust, hate, remembering and forgetting, trial and error. For example if one individual wouldn't want to learn from someone else, he/she couldn't communicate within the framework of the piece, hence others would communicate more, be more active. That way the group members very quickly found individual roles; leaders in some aspects, followers in others. To describe the value that is rising between individuals set in relations, the author coined the term 'social glue'. As components of a larger system, the system acquires value, which in terms holds the system together. As the group builds its own history, a history of interactions, "the contingencies of their relationship (...) allows repeated sequences of interaction to accrue meaning over time." (Steier 2005, p. 38). This is what the author refers to as a process of 'Sedimenting'.

A simple example for scripting the process of *Sedimenting*:

Step 1: do something

Step 2: choose an action you like

Step 3: repeat action at least 3 times

Step 4: repeat all action you have chosen so far

Step 5: go to Step 1

'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind' cannot be rehearsed 'outside of itself', meaning it cannot be dissected into parts for the purpose of rehearsing. Once the conditions are set and the script is communicated, the processes and dynamics that manifest the work are at play. The work is publicly performed once all processes have

crystallised into an identifiable ‘Gestalt’, meaning that the work, although in constant change, is recognisable from one manifestation to another. The point of public performance is defined by the choreographer, presenting one particular manifestation of a choreographic work rather than ‘the choreography itself’, which really does not exist at a particular ‘point in time’, but as a much wider process. The choreography comes into being once the conditions are set and its demise is sealed once the group of dancers disperses or stop engaging within its context. No set boundaries in time nor space delineate the actual choreography, whereas its manifestation – the public performance- clearly has. ‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’ exists outside the performance/manifestation as a dynamic set of relations, a mind composed out of four individuals, merciless shifting and changing over time as well as with each manifestation. It raises the question: On what canvas will or can choreography be mapped upon, apart from the glimpses offered in public performances? At this stage of development, to perceive an ephemeral construct of relations, a series of in-between - outside of their physical manifestations, will be foremost a matter of trust.

‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’ turned the stage a perceptive realm, for the dancer to observe and examine their own, as well as others, building of relations and for the audience to conduct a subjective study on how humans build notions of self in dialogue with others.

2.3.3.7 Limerick Trilogy (2005)



Fig 2.7: visualisation of ‘Limerick Trilogy’s choreographic structure (Klien 2005)

Key-developments:

- Three, separately created, independent choreographic processes create a completely new choreography when combined.
- No pre-fixed time or spatial frames (except the metaframe - duration and space - of performance)
- Providing a cradle for dance as discussed in Chapter 4

Three discrete pieces make up The Limerick Trilogy – Fat, Mud and Dust. As ‘Limerick Trilogy’ however, they are not performed in consecutive order, but have instead, been woven, glued and grown into one another creating a dynamic fabric, whereby - although each strand is a choreography in its own right - the individual

choreographic sections can no longer be differentiated from the whole. All three works, initially choreographed as solos, are dynamic choreographic templates, instruction based scripts that utilize and trigger specific dynamics of thought.

2.3.3.7.1 Fat

‘Im Fett (Fat)’, as discussed above, is a building force, integrating the processes of assembling ‘choreographic cells’ via the process of ‘Sedimentation’ (see 2.4 Terminology).

2.3.3.7.2 Mud

This work is of fleeting nature, as it has, similar to ‘Sediments of an Ordinary Mind’, no pre-defined thresholds for existence, meaning it exists as soon as the very basic conditions for its are established and it can only be dismantled in time, by being forgotten. However as a solo it was not necessarily created for performance but as a personal aesthetic practice for the dancer, a private choreography for dance, existing only within the dancer’s mind. The process asked the individual to sense – as a thought-body - his/her context on a continuous basis and to integrate the experience into a mental – non-linear - landscape of ‘recorded’ events. Simultaneously, the dancer roamed the established landscape and sensed his/her context. The choreographer, who aimed to provide a rich and stimulating context, initially led the procedure. Consciously remembered and unconsciously registered events and incidentals have all been subject to the dancer’s wider mental dynamics of forgetting, confusing, re-constructing, etc. Mud is the process of a choreographic imprint on the mind, a thought-embossing procedure, a mind in a sensitive recoding mode for associations, memories, consistencies, movements, causal chains and emotions.

2.3.3.7.3 Dust

Dust is a process of perception, examination and change. A dancer is examining his/her being in the world according to his/her own personal history in terms of patterns, habits and relics, that form, channel and regulate one's existence. Lepecki, drawing on Seremetakis, develops the notion of 'Historical Dust', widening the metaphor as well as the scope for discourse.

Historical Dust is not simple metaphor. When taken literally, it reveals how historical forces penetrate deep into the inner layers of the body: dust sedimenting the body, operating to rigidify the smooth rotation of joints and articulations, fixing the subject within overly prescribed pathways and steps, fixating movement within a certain politics of time and of place. (Lepecki 2006, p. 15)

This research does not separate the body from thought, and within 'Dust' Lepecki's notion of *Dust* applies to the collective as well as personal history. 'Dust' is a proactive search for patterns in life that have solidified by habit, from pirouettes to the arrangement of toiletries. It is the dancer's undertaking to deconstruct her/his own psyche, to de-create and liquefy it. The work acts as a shredder for habitual patterns of thought. Just as 'Mud', 'Dust' has no pre-defined timescale, and if publicly performed only 'accidents and incidentals' (Gormly, 2008) are to be witnessed, the greater part of the process remains hidden.

The choreography of 'Limerick Trilogy' manifested itself, when three dancers were playing out all three processes simultaneously, creating a balance of pattern creation, perception and de-construction. No other framing was provided by the choreographer, except a pre-determined duration for the work's manifestation in the form of a public performance. Communication arose and disappeared throughout the

process, dancers reacted to their context whilst serving as stimulus for others, 'Limerick Trilogy' offered a blank canvas for a recursive, interlinked dialogue and personal expression, creating a fragile state of communication whilst maintaining individual flexibility. At times of its manifestations on stage, 'Limerick Trilogy' offered, similar to 'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind' a dedicated space/time for the audience to sense and perceive relations and interconnections. However, in 'Limerick Trilogy' the patterns rising were not primarily concerned with human communication but with wider dynamics at play in life, possibly offering the spectator a richer aesthetic realm and territory for the perception of patterns and their dynamics.

Just as 'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind' this work was essentially not a stage-based choreography. All patterns emerged through the social contracts struck outside as well as inside the production period. This choreography was a subtle ecology of mind, control distributed within its agents, governed by internal (personal, collective interest) and external forces (such as social dynamics). 'Limerick Trilogy' offered the dancers an ecology in which they could negotiate their very own existence. It aimed to provide appropriate conditions for dance as a figure of thought to emerge. The concept of a choreographic act had considerably developed throughout this research period and in 'Limerick Trilogy' it no longer was concerned with step-making, timing, spacing, movement-qualities and tasks, nor shape, form or Gestalt. It was only concerned with the conditions for dance to emerge. Gathering the wood, stacking it in an appropriate location and setting it alight for the villagers to appreciate. The choreographic act is not *in* the fire. Neither can it be located in the writing nor description of fire; it is not the creation of fire. The choreographic act has to be one of

gathering (of relations) and offering for “*a kind of dance* [that] lays out a world in its involvement with being.” (Monni 2006, p. 1)

2.3.3.8 Frame and Substance Revisited

During the creation of ‘Limerick Trilogy’ it emerged that the concepts of Frame and Substance still offered a deceiving dualistic approach in discussing the choreographic act. In the context of this research the terms ‘Frame’ and ‘Substance’ are relics belonging to the world of choreography that, as described by Lepecki, “demands a yielding to commanding voices of masters (living and dead), it demands the submitting body and the desire to disciplining regimes (...), all for the perfect fulfilment of a transcendental and preordained set of steps, postures, and gestures that nevertheless must appear “spontaneous”. (Lepecki 2006 p. 9) It seemed that in the drive for constructing dynamic systems the author was drawn to, in Bateson’s words, “the overwhelmingly prevalent error of projecting models of conscious mental process onto preconscious mental process – an error from which even Cybernetics itself is only slowly emerging.” (Bateson 1991, p. 17) As Badiou reminds us dance is before the event, and the dancer cannot know of his/her dance (Badiou 2005). Dance *is* a preconscious process and the overlaying of a conscious ordering-act must necessarily prevent it from coming into being. A conscious ordering act, that is supportive of dance, can at best be the knowledge to bring forth the conditions for a preconscious mental process to emerge and manifest itself.

Frames and Substance exist only in the realm of conscious processes, to order existing material, whereby the choreographer has an option to be concerned with the

search for more or less relevant connections between the structure and the structured. For a choreographic act that embraces pre-conscious mental processes these differentiating terms are not serving well, as these processes cannot be consciously ordered, but must be enticed and provided for. Therefore, interdependent terms such as Frame and Flexibility, “an uncommitted potential for change” (Bateson 1991), are more appropriate, as they delineate properties of relations, rather than implying hierarchy and governable subjects (such as the frame that orders the substance). “Flexibility must be understood as a property of a system, and as such is concerned with relationships.” (Steier 2005, p. 44). Framing, as part of the choreographic act, is no longer the task of a central author, as frame and flexibility - “Frame Flexibility” (Steier 2005 p. 41) – is distributed throughout any complex system in a state of play, and, due to its level of complexity cannot be determined by any singular creator. A change of vocabulary implies a profound shift in thinking about choreography: no longer concerned with the mental model of Frames governing the flow and movement of Substance, but with the provision to achieve a desired Frame Flexibility in existing bodies/systems.

2.3.3.9 Choreography for Blackboards (2006)



Fig 2.8: substituting mapping of the overall choreographic structure of ‘Choreography for Blackboards’ in favour of visually manifesting the actual choreographic process (Klien, 2006)

There fore I will leave on one side everything I can think...it must be covered with a cloud of forgetting. And you are...to try to penetrate that darkness above you. Strike on that thick cloud of unknowing...and on no account think of giving up. (Anonymous quoted in Lawrence 2000, p. 189)

Key-developments:

- a choreographic script that is not concerned with physical movement
- the prelinguistic mark becomes a surface for choreography to unfold
- furthering the application of recursivity as a key-component of the choreographic act

Five individuals are working on six freestanding blackboards spread throughout a large open space. Actively drawing on the blackboards over a set period of time, they follow exact, rehearsed processes, developing and exchanging insights and individual expressions in various, immediate communicative forms, weaving their relations into a concentrated collective dance of minds. A silent and communal matrix of five individuals imprints a landscape of marks on the surfaces of blackboards.

“In the first place the mark is not anthropological; it is prelinguistic; it is the possibility of language, and it is everywhere there is relation to another thing or relation to an other. For such relations, the mark has no need of language.” (Royle quoting Derrida 2003, p. 63) Derrida’s concern is to question and rethink “the classical opposition between nature and law, or between animals alleged not to have language and man, author of speech acts (...). The logic of the mark goes ‘beyond all human speech acts’. There is nothing essentially human about the mark.”

(Royle 2003 p. 63)

Raw visual thinking and doing (drawing) produces a series of marks, that, sensually perceived, let thoughts rise to form a dance of relations - a figure of thought - in dialogue, exchange, sedimentation, learning, disintegration, erosion and demise.

Connoting qualities of Bateson's notion of ritual – “the cementing of a human community in the circularity of the meteorological year” (Bateson 1979) the audience members bear witness to the exploratory dimension of creative thinking inherent in all natural systems. “Insofar as we are a mental process, to that same extent we must expect the natural world to show similar characteristics of mentality.” (Bateson 1979)

Connecting Derrida's concept of ‘mark’ with Bateson's notion of ‘mind’ produces a work, that is concerned with prelinguistic, preconscious processes of relations, binding humanity into the larger ecology of the ‘Semiosphere’ (Hoffmeyer 1996). ‘Choreography for Blackboards’ becomes an aesthetic space for bridging the gap between man and cosmos, between the “way man thinks and the way nature works.” (Bateson 1991)

The choreography is a strategy to link what Lawrence calls the lacuna, the space between man and the cosmos. “To bridge that lacuna, in our minds, would be to re-interpret our patterns of understanding of our existence; to re-order our relationships with our physical, human, and potentially spiritual world.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 190)

‘Choreography for Blackboards’ is relying on the concept of Recursion and presents the most developed attempt during this research project to provide the conditions for such dynamic to rise to the surface, of being elevated to be sensed and perceived, both by the performers and the audience. Recursion is one of the most difficult concepts introduced by Bateson and at the same time an essential and on-going mental process and dynamic. A gestalt, entity or being – a complex system showing characteristics of mind – stands in direct relations to its environment, is shaped and configured by its very context. No part of a system, however closed off, exists in a timeless vacuum, i.e. parents, society as well countless other influences

shape the child in its development. This dynamic applies to every single entity within the larger ecology, as the child does shape the parents and society. There is no way of mechanistic modelling, although dominant shaping-factors might be perceived and identified. The countless influences acting upon one entity and the entity acting upon its environment are of fathomable complexity, creating an ongoing, immeasurable recursivity. Recursivity is one of the very basic, constant and non-measurable processes of life. "Broadly speaking, recursion concerns the way in which events continually enter into, become entangled with, and then re-enter the universe they describe." (Harries-Jones 2002, p. 3) In 'Choreography for Blackboards', much of the performance-time is dedicated to the participants concentrated 'sensing' and learning of each other, with extremely limited means. The performers are spatially separated and are not talking to each other. The only information they have of 'the other' is the personal historical knowledge of each other, i.e. what they actually know, or might not know of the other before they enter the installation-space, the visual manifestations of what 'the other' is drawing out of free association and streaming of consciousness on the blackboards, as well as observable behavioural patterns of the individuals. As all performers are following approximately the same processes everyone is building and freely associating upon each other's knowledge, forming a communicative matrix subject to dynamics of recursion. Throughout 'Choreography for Blackboards' *something* is rising: a communal reality of the senses and a recursive realm of thought.

All minds that bind the living together recursively validate and define themselves. Yes, recursively. One's context defines who one is. We are all part of each other's context, and so is the oak outside, the field beneath our feet and the worms below. We make each other possible. We enable or disable each other's elasticity and life. In fact, this could be an elegant description of recursivity. Our minds simply exist through and in others. My assumption is that even the dead are part of this fabric, as a tree needs to be dead at its core

to sustain a fragile skin of life around what is non-living. This could serve as a metaphor, binding the living and the dead into an ecology of belonging. (Klien, Valk, Gormly 2008)

2.3.4 THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

During the research-period the focus shifted from primarily performance orientated work (i.e. 'Nodding Dog') to practice-based work (i.e. 'Im Fett'), based on long periods of growth and cultivation of particular constellations and dynamics of human relations. The work adhered to the principle that its primary focus was not necessarily the actual performance, but the overarching processes of creation and learning. Performing these works in front of an audience signalled by no means the end of the work, or the 'death' of the system, but fulfilled a basic need for communication and sharing of insights and ideas.

All of the choreographic work that manifest this research can be described as operationally closed systems (p.22), in so far as they maintained their internal organisation through pre-agreed and/or emerging rules and maps. These parameters, or the conditions for such parameters to emerge, were set by the choreographer in various degrees of collaboration with the dancers. Whilst there was little freedom given to the dancer to decide upon the rules within 'Nodding Dog', all of the framework grew out of the dialogue between the dancer and the choreographer in 'Sense and Meaning', as discussed later (4.3). Nevertheless, once the structure of each work was set or emerged over time, each piece functioned as a closed system, able to absorb and thrive of changes that affected the internal elements of the system (i.e. different moods and conflict of the performers). Each work had varying degrees of admissible or relevant information exchange with an audience during an instance of performance.

Works such as 'Duplex' or 'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind' constituted systems whereby the audience became a witnessing collective to a concentrated web of relations unfolding in front of them, although the audience itself had no direct nor predetermined input into structuring procedures. 'Duplex' adhered to codes of a traditional audience-related dance-work, whereby the performers faced and performed 'to' the audience, 'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind' however, presented no preconceived performer-audience link as all efforts were channelled into the maintenance and growth of the system between the dancers. Nevertheless, there was always a perceivable effect of the audience upon the performance of the work: a different energy, focus and determination seemed to emerge in the performers when fellow humans witnessed their actions. The simple act of witnessing the performance of any given work appeared to give potency to the whole system by energising each individual dancer. Embedding an organisationally closed system, such as a choreographic work, into a larger system, such as an audience situation, mutually affects each particular system in some way, as 'closure' does not mean insulation or isolation, but allows for exchanges of information, some of which will be preconceived, whereby others will simply arise out of the shared situation, forming a complex body of invisible relations between the work, the performers and the audience.

During the performance of the work a world was produced by the dancer through dance, created for him/herself to inhabit, The act of witnessing made the audience at once part of this world and offered in a Heideggerian sense 'a disclosure of truth': a way to access our 'mutual ground of Being' (Monni 2004). The choreography always aimed to provide for this process by supporting the dancer in

his/her quest, thereby allowing for these specific phenomenological engagements to form. The audience assumed the role of the perceiver of human-relations in motion, and simply by its presence got the permission to continuously gaze at, and make itself part of, human life in a heightened state of awareness and articulation, an act rich of revelations and inspiration.

2.3.5 THE CHOREOGRAPHIC WORK AND ITS RELATION TO MUSIC

The entire research-period was marked in manifold ways by an ongoing collaboration between the author and his brother, the composer Volkmar Klien. A mutually respectful cooperation had evolved prior to the start of this research-project marked by similar interests in themes such as non-linear systems and cybernetics as well as a 'non-invasive' attitude towards each other's practice. This meant that whilst discussions around concepts and ideas were at times intense, the actual work was hardly talked about in terms of form or result. Usually only rough frameworks were agreed upon, including the approximate timeframe and overall sonic qualities and dynamics. In fact, there was no exact prescribed overarching process that would characterize the collaboration over the years, except an amicable, lenient and relaxed artistic as well as personal relationship, whereby each party is fully focused on their own practice. Still, through the basis of mutual interest, similar personal background and to some degree artistic co-evolution, the apparently separate creations, once put together seemed to create a field stronger than each of the parts alone.

Although the choreographic structures of the works discussed above were all characterized in their performance by various forms of non-linearity, the matching sound scores would have been pre-recorded and remained linear and unchanged for each performance. Only during the early stages of this research, especially for the creation of 'Duplex', attempts were made to apply non-linear organisational methods to both, the dance and the music. In 'Duplex', as discussed earlier (see 2.3.3.2), the structure of the music was synchronised with the structure of the choreography, both being updated in real-time. The choreography consisted of various movement

sequences that were directly linked to individual pieces of music and the running order was determined in real-time according to specific algorithms. During the performance the pre-recorded music sequences were arranged the same way as the movement. This meant that the relationship between dance and music did appear linear and pre-mediated, as the relationship remained constant (i.e. always one particular movement to particular music) and only modules 'containing' both, movement and music, were interchanged in real-time.

The actual process proved to be overly complicated and creatively limiting rather than liberating. Too much time had to be spent ensuring that each module of music/movement was compatible with any given other module that it might be paired up with or follow. After the creation of 'Duplex' the choreography no longer aimed to engage in a close, pre-mediated link with the music, hence there was also no more need to pursue this particular approach.

In the following co-operations this attempt to create equivalents in music and dance evolved into the designing of relationships between sound and dance on a higher level, giving the musical score as well as the choreography the chance to develop independently of each other, thus leaving synchronised sequencing behind to concentrate on more intricate conceptual as well as perceptual relationships. (Klien, V. 2008)

Later in the research there was neither a dogmatic nor premeditated approach that shaped the relationship between choreography and music. The choreography did not aim to form a thorough investigation of music, as pursued by numerous choreographers throughout decades (i.e. Lucinda Childs collaboration with Phillip Glass (Banes 1994)), nor was it claiming some kind of independence between music and dance as declared by Merce Cunningham (Copeland 2004). Although various

works, such as 'Im Fett', could have been envisaged by the choreographer to be performed without music, there was no insisting on the absence of music altogether as it had been popular amongst postmodernist choreographers such as Twyla Tharp or Yvonne Rainer (Banes 1994).

Volkmar Klien wrote music scores in pursuit of his own ideas and at times these compositions were paired up with certain choreographies if they supported the performer in his/her quest to reach certain mental states in movement. There were neither structural nor internal correlations, other than both works, music-score and choreography, were created at the same time and upon similar views of the world. It became apparent that the approach of using linear recording of sound whilst dealing with adaptive choreographic structures proved successful in terms of providing the performer with some sort of permanence.

Rather than telling specific stories or unfolding dramaturgical trajectories the musical scores (...) for dance and performance works outline fields of possibilities. They set up an environment for the piece to evolve in rather than trying to determine its path. This approach allows for music and choreography to co-evolve alongside and in complex relations to each other without constantly forcing upon one another designs for future development. Thus no underlying dramaturgical masterplan needs to be followed; nothing to hinder free evolution of patterns and movement. (Klien 2008)

The dynamic range of the music could be used by the dancer at any time to support or counterpoint his/her own movement dynamic during the performance. A 'permanent' landscape of sound provided the dancer with a stable environment for his/her thoughts to unfold in full movement, and at the same time offered some sense of safety in the dancer's pursuit of the unknown.

2.4 TERMINOLOGY

Throughout the research a number of concepts have been adapted and developed to describe certain compositional methods, dynamics and phenomena. The early vocabulary describing rule-based choreography, as outlined above, has given way for less mechanical descriptions and concepts. Other terms to be found in System Theory and Cybernetics have been borrowed for the practice-based aspects of the choreographic research process in their original meaning (such as *Feedback*, *Recursion*, *Emergence*, *Growth*, *System*, *Evolution*, *Adaptation and Resistance*), whereas a number of terms have been adapted or modified.

As discussed above, *Choreographic Genotype* describes the encoded rule-based structure, whereby *Choreographic Phenotype* describes the manifestation of these rules once they are played out (i.e. a performance on stage). The *Frame* and the *Substance* describe the relationship between governing forces and the governed. The term *Filler* illustrates the governed when any arbitrary Substance can fill the Frame, meaning that no interdependence between the Frame and the Substance has been created. However, the notions of Frame and Substance have later been substituted by *Frame* and *Flexibility* to stress their interdependence and discuss choreography in terms of relations and dynamics. In the context of a dance-performance a *Filler* would constitute movements that could be replaced for others without compromising the vision of the choreographer.

The concept of *Choreographic Cell* describes a set of relations in time and space that displays enough characteristics to be a 'perceivable' entity, dynamic or quality to other systems. *Choreographic Cells* allow existing mind-dynamics, nature in its manner of operation, to re-organise and reshape according to specific, repeatable patterns. In the context of a dance performance a *Choreographic Cell* constitutes a perceivable (to audience and/or other performers) emergent character in terms of spacing, movement dynamics and timing; an identifiable entity of temporarily stable dynamics and relations, rather than a preconfigured string of movement and/or dynamics. Thus, a *Choreographic Cell* can be integrated in the choreography as a building block for further developments. A *(Dynamic) Choreographic Template* describes a fixed or algorithmically pre-defined set of relations, without predetermining the actual elements subject to these relations. A number of dynamics within the choreographic process have also been labelled by the author, such as *Skin-Making* as the process of creating resistance of the *Choreographic Cell* towards its environment, hence creating more stable constructs.

The process of *Sedimenting* refers to the gathering of information/material through a simple mechanism that links the act of repetition to the mental processes of forgetting, selecting and remembering, allowing information (steps, thoughts, perception, memory, etc) to be collected whilst accruing meaning over time. *Sedimenting* is a simple form of creation over time. *Choreographic Imprinting* stands for the transfer of knowledge between two or more people by simple means of perception, whereby no pre-determined fixed code is to be transferred - giving the dancers' subjective perception, selection and decision-making an active role within the process of creation. In the specific context of this research, *Intuition* denominates

an essential tool for individuals to navigate within complex systems. *Intuition* refers to a decision-making process that couples the instant recall of experiences in similar systemic constellations/events with all the sensory information available in the present moment. It is a preconscious, prelinguistic instantaneous 'being and acting in the moment'.

2.5 SUMMARY

During this research, the author's imago of the cosmos has changed. What seemed a rather solid reality upon the choreographer was to built his creations, arranging matter into a preferred order with 'unlimited imagination', has liquefied over the past few years into a much richer reality of relations and relations of relations – a choreographic universe, whereby one's orderings are always acts upon and subject to larger dynamics at play. Perceiving the world from a choreographer's perspective, concentrating on the interplay and changes of relations and patterns, has been key to the creation of this research. And as the work was created, the author's perception of reality was changing in an integrated, intertwined and impenetrable dance with its creations. Now the author's cosmos entails a multidimensional-matrix of moving matter and marks that happens to produce, amongst many other things, temporary and spatially stable realities for living.

It can be assumed, as every system has a context, that a nth number of other realities have to stand in interplay and exist in the same or other parameters of time and space. System Theory (and its writers such as Bateson, Uexkuell, Hoffmeyer, etc.) has shown that for any system to exist an interdependence and contextualisation with other systems is of essence. Being severely limited to reach beyond, the wider conditions of our reality will remain a mystery.

“The Ding an sich (...) is (...) always and inevitably out of reach. You have sense organs specially designed to keep the world out. It is like the lining of your gut, which is especially designed to keep out foreign proteins, to break down the foreign protein before it enters the bloodstream.”
(Bateson1991, p. 182)

Choreography as an aesthetics can offer glimpses past the lining of one's reality and over the period of six years this research had been shifting the author's practice from a conventional choreographic act, one of submitting a subject to a pre-ordained idea of movement and form, one of building, mapping and planning to a new paradigm in thinking about governance and order from an aesthetic standpoint.

Finally, the notion of the choreographic act settled on embedding one's subjective patterning ideas to the wider choreography of life, harnessing dynamics and processes without a pre-determined product or order in mind, but aiming for specific dynamics – a certain Frame Flexibility - to emerge, including the one of dance. For dance, the possibility of change as inscribed in a body, to take hold of the situation, to open up new realms for perceiving life and its dynamics, and disclose new dimensions of reality, binding us as creatures together with our creations into this wider ecology of belonging.

I will refuse to choreograph institutions into being, which bury fruitful uncertainty beneath false or sterile assumptions, the lazy dogma of reductionist thinking, illusory perceptions or presuppositions. In the universe I know, there is only the contingency of fluid and free-floating forces. When I conduct the orchestra of space, commanding figments of time in the temporary shelter of my quicksilver ideas, their containers are never erected with the stones of dead builders but are instead undetermined, undecidable, and potentially endless. These vessels might transform themselves or be shed and forgotten, rediscovered or subsumed. Their skin is the surface of a pataphysical architecture; their choreography a collapsing, spiralling fall from grace. Like dust from the feet of the traveller at the end of his journey, it is from the mucky ground of being that I bring new form to the surface, to imbue life, to create a blossom, to realise potential and flirt with infinity. Perpetuity is a fleeting glimpse: true stability embraces ebb and flow. As an architect of the invisible, I, like you, set entities into relationship with one another. Sometimes this involves no more than the reshuffling of context; enough 're-framing' for an idea-body to get unstuck, rough and tumble, from its habitual pattern of circumstance and repetition. (Klien, Valk, Gormly 2008)

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICS OF THE CHOREOGRAPHIC ACT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Choreography, as outlined in the previous chapter, means acting in a world perceived in patterns, connections, regularities, proportionalities, relations, relations of relations, ecologies and energies.

This chapter discusses how the personal mode/act of ordering is intrinsically entwined with one's perception of the world, and how this linkage directly dictates the larger tendencies of how a society is being built. It further examines the political dimensions of such extended understanding of choreography.

As choreography is proposed as an aesthetics – a sensitive knowing – the choreographic act can not simply be reduced to the act of distributing pre-existing knowledge. It is also the very source of knowledge. 'Aesthetics' in this context (Cooper, Margolis and Sartwell, 1992) is used according to its original meaning, coined by German philosopher Alexander Baumgartner in 1735 as 'the science of sensitive knowing'. Aesthetic from the Greek *aisthetikos*, 'of perception' was originally envisaged by Baumgarten to be the perceptual counterpart of logic that can open up new ways of seeing the world. (Cooper, Margolis and Sartwell, 1992) Therefore a choreographic act of 'revelation', as proposed in this chapter is not to be

curtailed to the creative/playful or inventive application of pre-existing ideas: it is an aesthetic enquiry into and upon life and encompasses, as ‘sensitive knowing’, the act of perception, as well as the act of creation based upon such knowledge.

The perception of patterns, relations and their dynamics, the integration to existing knowledge, and the creative application to a wider reality, all together constitute the choreographic act. The implications and political dimensions of such act are outlined and discussed in this chapter and put into a practice-based context by the choreographic work ‘Sense and Meaning’ (Klien and Giannotti 2007), a process that was unfolding throughout the last year of this research, further discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2 PERCEPTION, IMAGINATION, CREATION

Ananda Coomaraswamy, as discussed in Chapter 1, wrote that “art is to imitate nature in its manner of operation.” (Coomaraswamy 1934, p.48). Rather than simply imitating nature’s appearance, the artist deduces processes from a reality as perceived by the subject to formulate structural methodologies.

Compositional/creational tools are ‘learned’ dynamics and processes, with some tools – such as repetition - having their basis in an observed biological world. Very little literature has been published pursuing this line of thought, however In ‘Civilization And Its Discontents’, the eminent psychologist Sigmund Freud made a short but poignant statement about the interplay of nature and the ideas of ordering:

order is in fact copied from her [nature]; observation of the great astronomical regularities gave man not only the model for the introduction of order into his own life, but the first clues about how to do it. Order is a kind of compulsion to repeat, which, once a pattern is established, determines when, where and how something is to be done, so that there is no hesitation or vacillation in identical cases. (Freud 2004, p. 38)

For example, the simple structural tool of ‘repetition’ as commonly used by composers and choreographers, is deeply embodied in the repetitive cycles of day and night, ebb and flow and the calendar’s seasons. It is from our environment that we deduct our structural processes to employ them for our own means, to write music, choreograph dances or set humans in relations to build companies, set contracts or build nations. Additionally to Sigmund Freud, Nelson Goodman, the American philosopher known for his work on systems and aesthetics, pointed out that deducting patterns is as much an act of creation as applying such patterns, when suggesting that “if worlds are as much made as found, so also knowing is as much remaking as

reporting. (...) Discovering laws involves drafting them. Recognising patterns is very much a matter of inventing and imposing them. Comprehension and creation go together.” (Goodman 1978, p. 22) However, Goodman’s writing lacks the integration of his ideas into a larger epistemological framework, failing to point out the recursive nature of such processes. Deducting/inventing patterns and modes of creation are recursively self-validating by being integrated in the larger notion of *Umwelt* building, as discussed by the prominent Danish biochemist and cybernetician Jesper Hoffmeyer, meaning that all living things imprint their “meaning on the meaningless object, thereby turning it into a conveyor of meaning in each respective *Umwelt*.” (1996, p. 54) There is and can be no mechanistic link or separation between recognising, inventing and creating. One process makes the other possible.

Perceived patterns that have been assimilated into human knowledge are deeply connected to all patterns at the disposal for any conscious act of creation. It can be assumed that human creation is limited foremost not by imagination, but by perception and the lack of ability to integrate the perceived into existing thought processes. This observation is in line with Lawrence’s (2000) hypothesis “that it is the imago of the cosmos that structures relationships on the planet. (...) The organisation of work enterprises has mirrored over time changing conceptions, and therefore imagos, of the cosmos.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 80). Lawrence, a student of psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion and one of Europe’s foremost group-relation experts, has been a crucial influence during the later stages of this research, as his work focuses on the invisible relations that bind collectives together. In his writings he outlines how limited readings of nature (hierarchical, compartmentalised-thinking, etc.) leads to a

limited repertoire of patterns from which to create conditions for living, as people are set in, and by one another, in certain relations.

The resulting creations, the artificial organisational constructs, are recursively validating each other, creating subtle balances - the very assumptions on which our collective reality is built upon. As long as in one's perception of reality cause and effect is tightly linked and easily separable from its context, the only viable option for building physical and mental structures seems to follow a linear path, whereby a substance of some sort is fixed within a compositional structure of beginning, middle and end. The resulting assumptions in turn form gaps and holes in the rhizome of relations, a kind of negative space that creates the mould for other structures to fill, thereby creating attractors or force fields in the fabric of relations. These, once over, cause ideas to develop into certain structural/relational patterns or shapes which recursively form the fluid matrix of life. Such fields act upon choreography as on any other human endeavour, and in dance, these fields are formed by theatre's real parameters and conventions, ranging from an acceptable duration of a performance to financial limitations in the rehearsal process, the specific training of dancers, the pressures on the producers in the light of public perception, tradition of lighting, costume, staging, etc.

The context defines the subject in endless ways, pulling it into its Gestalt, whether its author is consciously aware of this process or not. Artificial constructs and creations are intertwined with organisational dynamics not part of a conscious process of creation but bound into much wider processes of self-organisation, emergence, learning and evolution. To what degree human creation is no more than a short-lived

myth subject to much larger forces at play remains unanswered. However, a notion of change subject to human consciousness clearly remains in one's experience.

Maybe, a meaningful choreographic act that aims at the production of some sort of artefact, brings 'metaphors to live by' into being, by supporting and pointing towards newly perceived, integrated and applied ways of organising ideas and organisms. The choreographic act can therefore serve as a subtle, non-mechanistic mode of change.

3.3 CHOREOGRAPHY OF REVELATION

After all, once a world is perceived in interconnected patterns and relations, as a whole, the creative act will always be applied upon such world. Hence choreography is contentiously and by definition an act upon life. This makes it at once potent and invisible, and might manifest itself in ‘non-theatrical’, ‘non-performative’ ways. The baking of bread, the building of companies and the drawing of inauspicious scribbles might all be manifestations of and contributions to the choreographic. Once perceived as an aesthetic, nothing is/can be outside the frame, choreography cannot be isolated within an artefact, but merely be the central focus of a choreographic act, as the artefact in turn will act upon a wider interconnected reality. The act of choreography is one upon reality, unconditionally bound into the larger fabric of life, making it, at its very essence, a contributor to the Joseph Beuys’ ‘social plastic’ or ‘social sculpture’ and thereby a social choreographic act.

Only on condition of a radical widening of definitions will it be possible for art and activities related to art [to] provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline: to dismantle in order to build ‘a social organism as a work of art’... every human being is an artist who – from his state of freedom – the position of freedom that he experiences at first-hand – learns to determine the other positions of the total art work of the future social order. (Beuys 1974)

There simply can be, or *is*, no disconnect between the choreographic act and society, and the choreographic act and politics. The impression of separation can only arise out of collective unawareness and mechanistic modes of thinking. Central to choreography, since its inception, has been the act of setting of humans in relations to each other, creating certain orders and dynamics on stage. In the work of Derrida (see

Royle 2003, p. 63) the ‘political’ “entails ‘a certain type of non-“natural” relationship to others”, while Lawrence uses the word in the sense of “the “influence” of one person or party over another.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 170). This setting of relationships *is* a political act and is embodied in choreography. Consequently this thesis aims to deepen the awareness of the political dimension of choreography.

Politics depends on the methods applied for the artificial structuring/enabling of patterns and dynamics within the semiosphere. The specific as well as everyday-act of setting humans in relation to each other and towards their environment is a direct consequence of the subjective and social ‘imago’ of the cosmos. As discussed above, the outcome and the imago are recursively validating themselves, as modes of creations are intrinsically fused with modes of perception.

The imago of the cosmos in the mind directly influences the nature of human beings’ behaviour in and to their environment in which they make their experiences and co-create reality. This reality becomes a representation of the cosmos. Similarly, the cosmos in the mind is a mirror of the environment. They are mutually constructed through the psychic processes of projection and introjection. (Lawrence 2000, p. 169)

According to Bateson the problematic within the dominant perception of nature is, that it is based on mechanistic principles. Rule-based conducts in politics, economics, science, religion and the arts have emerged out of this specific observation of nature. Bateson has placed the seeds of mechanistic thinking with the manifestations of Newton’s and Locke’s ideas and related it directly to the separation of body and mind and mind and matter (Bateson 1981). Although Lawrence too points towards the problematic of the body/mind split and the adoption of Newton-Cartesian ideas, he also traces such thinking in terms of “‘rupture’ with the church, that ‘the worlds’ phenomena were no longer (...) seen as part of a cosmic wholeness

but, rather, parts of a complicated machine.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 169). This view of the world has directly resulted in human beings considering themselves in charge of their environment, and that they have the control, the engineering skills and creative imagination to solve all of its possible problems. Bateson outlines the consequences of that thinking:

If you set God outside and set him vis-à-vis his creation and if you have the idea that you are created in his image, you will logically and naturally see yourself as outside and against the things around you. And as you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical considerations. The environment will seem to be yours to exploit. Your survival unit will be you and your folks or conspecifics against the environment of other social units, other races and the brutes and vegetables. If this is your estimate of your relation to nature and you have an advanced technology your likelihood of survival will be that of a snowball in hell. You will die either of the toxic by-products of your own hate or, simply, of overpopulation and overgrazing. (Hoffmeyer 1996, p. 135)

3.3.1 POLITICS OF SALVATION

The old paradigm in choreography, the top-down determining of movement sequences and structural frameworks for individuals or a collective to exist and perform within, still subscribes to a mechanistic world-view. A world-view characterised by set internal and external power structures, and a linear- predestined line of events, and the top-down engineering approach of setting humans in artificial relations to one another. As politics, this embodies a ‘politics of salvation’ (Lawrence 2000), offering ‘packages’ of relations and movement to its subjects/dancers, with no or little authority on their part to modify or change them. Salvation has always been linked to the notion that someone knows all, and others only have partial information.

The politics of salvation can be clearly seen in the missionary effort of the churches. The idea was to convert the heathen – that is – save them from Christ. And countries that developed empires were also caught in the same dynamic. To be sure, there were other reasons, but (...) the principal rationale was to bring enlightenment to the savage. (...) This century has seen the development of ideas on “social engineering”. Essentially, [Lawrence sees] the politics of salvation as giving solutions to people and not allowing them to define their life situation for themselves and taking their authority to alter it. (Lawrence 2000, p. 170)

Here the limitations and deeper assumptions of works by choreographers such as William Forsythe show themselves. Forsythe’s practice is concerned with ever so complicated structuring procedures and ideas of ordering. Works like ‘One Flat Thing Reproduced’ (Forsythe 2000) are evidence of tense networks of actions and reactions. Bodies are bound into a tightly scripted web of cause and effect and the work is repeatable with little variation: a mastery demonstration of precision and individual movement ability knotted into a web of interactions. What appears to be a complex web of human relations is a pre-conceived script, a complicated machinery, that even according to Forsythe himself could be equated to a ‘Baroque Performance Machinery’ in its operation (Forsythe 2006). The dancers are governed by a choreographic script and their movements, whether previously self-determined or not, are set by the choreographer. A complex world represented by, and rendered into, a complicated score. This mechanistic approach to choreography, however masterful in its execution, carries within it the notion that one can build and construct his/her way out of anything and into salvation simply by continuing diligent world building, projecting one’s organisational ideas onto the larger canvas of society and making the subjects dance according to one’s vision.

While quantum physics, System Theory, Cybernetics and various other practices are pointing towards the intrinsic insanity of the present collective model of

thought and perception, the dominant modes of technological, mechanistic thinking are still engrained in all forms of creation and production. “This is apparent from the language and metaphors that we use in the West. We do believe in “causes and effects”. We talk of “engineering social change”. We subscribe to “progress and achievement”. (...) The metaphors we live by structure how we experience the world with its phenomena and events.”

(Lawrence 2000, p. 186)

3.3.2 THE PROPAGATION OF PATTERNS

The choreographic act of the old paradigm – a ‘choreography of salvation’ - is immanent, reflective of the larger forms of organisation in the social sphere, therefore it only replicates previously known ideas of order. In fact, as System Theory outlines, self-similar, deeply interconnected patterns can be observed across all scales of organisation, exposing a ‘fractal’ or ‘holographic’ universe (Talbot 1991) of patterns. Patterns can be propagated throughout all systems in complex and mostly irreducible ways. Goethe, well before the rise of System Theory, summed it up from an aesthetic base:

War’ nicht das Auge sonnenhaft
Wie koennten wir das Licht erblicken?
(If the eye were not sun-like
It could never behold the sun.) (Hoffmeyer 1996, p. 47)

A choreographic act according to the ‘politics of salvation’ is therefore mirrored right across the scale of human creation. “The pattern of mass-production relies on an authority structure whereby managers oversee supervisors, who, in turn, organise workers on the shop or factory floor. Everyone is subordinate to someone else.”

(Lawrence 2000, p. 194) Such factories and companies are essentially organised in the same overarching choreographic modus as Petipa's 'Swanlake' (1895) and the majority of contemporary choreographic dance works.

In fact, the framing within a choreographic composition is often directly transferable to the framing of the cultural organisation that houses the choreographic work. The management structures of a classical ballet company are mostly reflective of the organisational structures of the choreographic work on stage. Pre-determined, hierarchical movement, very little scope for play or exploration and a low tolerance of flexibility would be all appropriate organisational attributes of both. At the same token a collective, such as Judson Dance Theatre, marked by equality of its members, a wide radius for play, tolerant to outside influences and distributed, non-hierarchical ordering mechanisms– will produce work embodying its organisational attributes (Banes 1987, 2003, Lycouris 1996). Organisational patterns have a direct and real effect within the social-sphere. This is true for dance-companies as it is for a factory relying on a hierarchical authority structure as outlined above: “Such an authority pattern is directly reminiscent of childhood relationships with parents and teachers, and so it is the emotional relationships of childhood that are re-created and re-enacted in the work enterprise. Consequently, the individual worker is pressed to act at less than an adult level.” (Lawrence 2000, p. 194)

Personally, I believe that the way we organise our pots and pans has a direct, recursive implication on the way we organise our children and our relationships in general. However, it is hardly the pots that determine the order of our world directly, but a deeper, imprinted unconscious order, which governs humanity, society and the individual. (Klien, Valk 2007)

In the recursive manner outlined above, 'Sense and Meaning' (Klien and Giannotti 2007; Appendix 9), forming the final choreographic work of this research, introduces new patterns to the audience, extending the dancer's as well as the audience's repertoire, not only in terms of 'the scope of human movement', but of patterns itself. Giannotti took one year 'to feed off' and expose herself to new patterns, to integrate them into her being and bring them forth in communal situations, such as 'Sense and Meaning'. In this way 'Sense and Meaning' is a deeply social affair, for the dance to become an agent for sharing and propagating newly sensed patterns, dynamics and relations throughout the social-sphere.

3.3.3 POLITICS OF REVELATION

In opposition to ‘a politics of salvation’ (Lawrence 2000) the new paradigm of choreography, as proposed in this research, operates from an aesthetic base, in line with what Lawrence labels, a ‘politics of revelation’ – a continuous creating/ordering intertwined with an ever-unfolding knowledge through observation. It is the thinking about the world as a semiosphere, as an ecology of mind (Bateson 1972), whereby everything stands in inter-relation with each other, everything being part of many minds, interdependent and subject to many forces at play, that demands an ecological-holistic perspective.

The pre-occupation of the politics of salvation is with change – that is, other holding power impose it from the outside on individuals or systems. The politics of revelation is preoccupied with the conditions and resources for the exercise of transformation that come from inside the person or system and are brought about through the people revealing what may be the truth of their situation to themselves and taking authority to act on their interpretations. (Lawrence 2000, p. 173)

And here the new paradigm in choreography is showing itself. Accepting the very notion of order and movement as something non-linear/unfixed and outside our capabilities to measure or control, change is no longer ‘written’ or imposed by a choreographer, created in the image of god from the outside. In this context the choreographer is primarily concerned with the conditions for transformations that come from and within the person or a system – offering the conditions to disclose “a prime knowledge that opens up the world” (Monni 2006, p. 1) to emerge from within a body. Such knowledge is at no time contained by consciousness, but is dispersed throughout the system’s body, whether such body delineates a human being or a

larger group. The choreographer of the old paradigm has become too much like his/her God.

It is recognized that every succeeding generation must dissolve its imago of God and allow it to wither and elude his grasp; otherwise man becomes like his own idol. The image comes between him and what the image could represent and become.”(Lawrence 2000, p. 191)

The choreographic act according to a politics of revelation – a ‘choreography of revelation’ - does exactly that: it continuously supports the re-sensing of dominant modes of ‘being’ in order to change his/her cosmos and his/her place in it. Such choreographic act can only be carried out from an aesthetic base, revealing that what is ‘sacred’. “When you get (...) the sacred and the aesthetic, which are very closely related, you are partly standing off to see a whole. Consciousness is tending to focus in, whereas notions like the sacred and the beautiful tend to be always looking for the larger, the whole.” (Bateson 1991, p. 299)

Bateson never defined what exactly he meant with his concept of the ‘sacred’ but he referred to the overall interconnectivity, the ecology of mind, as something that cannot be tempered with. We all have our being within this ecology and our acts contribute to this ecology. Thinking, one that belongs to the old paradigm of choreography, can never integrate harmoniously into this larger system. The pretence of independence, thinking in parts instead of interlinking dynamics can only be absorbed in an ecological system to a limit before the whole system gets unstable or rids itself of the very source of conflict. “Humanity can not act upon the fabric in a disconnected, abusive way and pretend it doesn’t.” (Bateson 1987, p. 200) The old paradigm in choreography follows the principle of reductionism, led by consciousness

that “tends to focus in.” (Bateson 1991, p. 299) The sacred, however, is in “the integrated fabric of mental process that envelops all our lives - and the principal way (...) that has allowed man and women to approach this (but not necessarily the only way) has been through religious traditions, vast, interconnected metaphorical systems.” (Bateson 1987 p. 200) The choreographic act according to a politics of revelation might offer another way for the disclosure of the sacred, by “looking for the larger, the whole.” (Bateson 1991, p. 299) Maybe this is why Bateson believed that artists sometimes have a deeper knowledge than all of science. (Bateson 1987)

3.4 SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

It is deceiving to think that the term Social Choreography (Klien, Valk 2007) was coined to describe a simple extension or transposition of an existing concept, the one of old-school choreography, to the social sphere. This would only be a colourful extension of the mechanistic manner of social engineering. The social choreographic act is the unfolding of a politics of revelation upon the canvas of society, upon the social plastic. Creating the conditions for ‘the sacred’ to be experienced, a binding device in a splintered society. The term Social Choreography really delineates nothing more than the new paradigm of choreography as outlined in this thesis. A choreographic act, by its very nature, is a social one, as it can’t escape its reverberation, transpositions into larger spheres of organisation. Still, the term ‘social’ has been adopted to delineate, if the primary focus of the choreographic act should be upon the social.

Choreography has been adapted and introduced into the fabric of social reality as a kind of perceptual framing device, a self-actuating template for an ecologically reconfigured experiment in contemporary subjectivity. The cognitive scientist Francisco Varela has said, “The blind spot of contemporary science is experience.” Social Choreography has opened an arena of cultural interplay between artists and audience, a lived and interconnected world of relationships, patterns and dynamics, a region of new and subtle observational capacities in which a deeper level of interdependence, an implicate order of mind and nature, has emerged as a model for a new and regenerative social reality. (Klien, Valk 2007)

What Social Choreography recognises is that essentially “actions, if it be planned at all, must always be planned upon an aesthetic base.” (Keeney quoting Bateson 1983, p. 187) Such choreography adheres to its aesthetic base, and takes the role of cultivation in stark contrast to one of engineering.

One of the major anti-human fallacies of the scientific community, perhaps especially the engineering community, is the premise that it is possible to have total control over an interactive system of which oneself is a part. Now this is a major pathology in family life, in marriage relations, in organisation in general and so forth. (Harries-Jones 1995, p. 7)

However,

to cultivate, one could say – is to disturb or rupture the soil – but this is not a purely destructive act. Cultivation means bringing air into the soil, turning things over, for new surfaces to emerge, for moisture to penetrate. The choreographic act is one of cultivation – as the shifting and changing and digging over of a situation in the social realm, allows for a new awareness to enter into a specific situation. (Klien, Valk 2007)

To pro-actively change and transform the way things are done – the way things are – one must thrust a deeply subversive act into the existing language of patterning. New structural vocabulary as well as a new mode of thinking about ordering, namely the one of revelation and not salvation, must be introduced to the fabric of social relations. By revealing new compositional and organisational procedures, most of which are likely to remain non-verbalised and ‘non-written’, the

very assumption of reality has to be revisited in the larger system. Hence, by mere virtue of recursive transposition of patterns throughout the system, a re-configured reality might emerge. After all “a whole pattern of cycled transforms triggers change, rather than the conscious purpose of an individual.” (Keeney 1983, p. 194)

New patterning procedures can only reveal themselves within the larger framework of which one is part. This awareness should evoke a renaissance in the examination of the fundamental forces at work in nature, perceiving and learning from them, thereby introducing new elements to, as well as changing the very assumptions of, our collective repertoire of ordering, structuring and hence creation. A social choreography is a collective project, not a utopian dream subject to an individual’s consciousness. It is choreography that brings the social plastic into being; everyone’s perception needs to be engaged and choreography needs to provide the possibility to extend the collective’s repertoire of patterns, relations and dynamics by creating and/or offering a dedicated space/time to suspend habitual thought and to subjectively experience their surrounds.

3.5 SUMMARY

The way we order our environment, set people in relation with each other or build our habitat is intimately connected to the way we read nature. The patterns available to us for any kind of creation are derived from our understanding of our surroundings, our connection to it, and how we perceive our own role within this larger system. Perception and creation are interlinked in a recursive dance of validation and change. This delineates perception as well as creation as a political act, as the patterns deducted on the scale of perception, set people in relation to each other on another.

A ‘Choreography of Salvation’, the dominant mode of ordering and setting relations in the Western World, is derived out of a mechanistic world-view, whereby the subject, whether it is nature, a nation or a dancer, is to be governed by hierarchical power-structures and relations. The artefacts of a ‘Choreography of Salvation’ take the form of factories of mass-productions, attempts of ‘social engineering’ and individuals moving in unison, ‘or not’, at the will of another.

In contrast to this mode of ordering stands a ‘Choreography of Revelation’, built on system-theoretical insights and ecological world-views. It is driven by the very notion that order is something non-linear and unfixed, predominantly outside our ability to control and predict. The act of a ‘Choreography of Revelation’ is no longer the attempt to write and determine a precise future, but to create the condition for revealing a prime knowledge that opens up the word (Monni 2006). The creative act

of 'Choreography of Revelation' is a constant state of simultaneous perception and creation, probing the 'sacred' (Bateson 1991) and re-building ones reality accordingly: changing the notion of our cosmos and our place in it.

In *Sense and Meaning* (Klien, Giannotti 2007) such 'Choreography of Revelation' was taking place in the form of a conversation of two people continuously exploring patterns of perception and reality. At some point of this conversation a considerable body of ways of sensing these patterns were collated, recognized and finally applied by a moving thought-body, in a communal setting. During the performance of this 'prime knowledge', new patterns of reality, were offered to be perceived by the witnessing collective. Work like 'Sense and Meaning' can offer a concentrated communal ground for perception, for re-sensing reality, whilst serving as an incubator for newly perceived patterns and relations. In this way, the studio and the stage become an dedicated space/time for revelation, sheltering a wider knowing that reveals itself as the work unfolds to all witnesses, and will, in time, reverberate, in impenetrable ways, into other spheres of organisations by resonating through the dancer, the choreographer and the audience. An artefact, whether created in the choreographic mode of salvation or revelation, will find inexplicable ways to touch the larger systems it is part of, as its patterns propagate throughout the larger matrix of life, thereby shaping the way we apply ourselves to the socio-sphere.

There is an illusive and mysterious way in which dance seems to embody a secret recipe for the creation and maintenance of living systems such as a Balinese village or an arts organization in Limerick. I can feel the presence of the dancing that happens at Daghdha [Dance Company] like an invisible fabric that touches and envelopes everything we do, everything that happens. (Klien, Valk 2007)

This adds another dimension of responsibility to the choreographic act, as in an interlinked world each act is irrefutably bound into the larger system, and the manner of ordering: top-down, hierarchical, non-linear or otherwise will support, propagate or erode dominant modes of organisation.

Dance allows the thought body to show itself, it is the showing of the body in thought, independent of what constitutes such a body, whether its boundaries are made of skin or by constitutions played out in laws. Dance is the forming of certain configurations of thought, expressed in manifold ways by the birth of ideas or the shivering body. That is why evolution, animals and states are said to be dancing at times, because certain conditions are met allowing a system to be flexible and its emerging dancing body to be naked, anonymous and selfless. This is what constitutes dance. Hence dance is a matter of thought pointing towards the possibility of change as inscribed in the body. For the spectator to perceive dance, is an exercise in trust, demanding the audience's absolute gaze, oblivious to representational decor and fully focused on the underlying nakedness of a flexible body in thought. Our civilization has been turning dance into a perversion of itself, applying to and onto it, everything that will prohibit its existence in the form of predetermined rigid time, space and action. It might be a symptomatic need to resist mortality's grip. Maybe the reasons are to be found in the dominant muddle of language, which in Bateson's words "stops us from thinking straight" and from dancing in general. To govern dance is in itself a misleading conception, a seemingly vain attempt to fence off its mortal nature, putting shackles on what cannot be tamed without turning it into an empty shell, a sign pointing towards something other than what it is. To choreograph dance conventionally sets movement in stone, whilst trying to re-create, it proves to be an illusion. Dance is Dance and cannot be tampered with, just as Bateson reminds us that "God cannot be mocked." Dance has been crippled by conventional choreography for centuries. It is time to release choreography's hold on dance and let it simply be. (Klien, Valk 2007)

CHAPTER IV

DANCE AS A FIGURE OF THOUGHT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first three chapters have explored the potential of a paradigm shift in thinking about choreography, outlining it as a new aesthetics, the one of change. Such development includes the description of choreography as an artistic discipline in its own right, depicting the choreographic act, as the creation of conditions for change. However, since dance and choreography are intimately linked at various historical, practical and conceptual levels, a new understanding of choreography requires revisiting and examining the notion of dance. Having developed choreography as an aesthetics of change, dance has to be discussed and understood in its own right, to understand its essential connection and contribution to choreography, as a notion of deep entanglement between these two fields of activity remained, and intensified throughout the later stages of this research.

This chapter sketches out the dawn of a new paradigm in dance, dance as a quality within a system, rather than a ‘mutually agreed system of artificial signs’ (Williams 2004), a potential property of any system, rather than a system in itself. Initially, the chapter draws on the French philosopher Badiou, adopting and adapting his terminology ‘Dance as a Metaphor for Thought’ (Badiou 2005) to open the discourse of dance as a essential dynamic within, and according to, a system-theoretical world-view. A re-configured, cybernetic notion of dance, ‘Dance as a

Figure of Thought', is then integrated into existing contemporary dance practice by contextualising the idea of an extended notion of dance within the framework of Finish academic and choreographer Kirsi Monni's writings on 'Embodied Thinking', which build upon Heidegger's phenomenology (Monni 2004, 2005, 2006), and discussed in light of the research's last choreographic work 'Sense and Meaning' (Klien, Giannotti 2007).

4.2 IN SEARCH OF THE FIGURE

Why does dance dawn on Nietzsche as a compulsory metaphor for thought? It is because dance is what opposes itself to Nietzsche-Zarathustra's great enemy, and enemy he designates as the "Spirit of Gravity". Dance is, first and foremost, the image of a thought subtracted from every spirit of heaviness.
(Badiou 2005, p. 57)

Instead of approaching dance as an entirely human affair, dance proposed as a 'figure of thought', is not primarily concerned with physical movement nor would it be described as an artistic discipline. Dance is a specific quality, dynamic or property of a system. It is a system engaged in full thought, a thought-body; such figure can emerge from within any underlying system displaying features of mind and manifest itself in countless ways, such as piano-playing, daydreaming, city-planning or imagination. Thought, according to Cybernetics, specifically following Bateson's ideas who defines thought in the widest sense as "(...) the nature of mental process" (Bateson 1998, p. 16), is not bound by skin, and describes processes of mind (outlined in Bateson 2002 p. 85) weaving an interconnected world of the living. Such mental processes include evolution, embryology, and "all those lesser exchanges of information and injunction that occur inside organisms and that, in the aggregate, we call life." (Bateson 1998, p. 17) This wider notion of 'thought' is ever-present in Bateson's concept of mind (Bateson 1979) as well as in Hoffmeyer's description of the Semiosphere, the sphere of the living, bound together by processes of exchange and propagation.

The semiosphere is a sphere just like the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and the biosphere. It penetrates to every corner of these other spheres, incorporating all forms of communication: sound, smells, movements, colors, shoes, electrical fields, thermal radiation, waves of all kinds, chemical signals, touching, and so on. In short, signs of life. (Hoffmeyer 1996, p. 1)

If dance is approached as a particular figure of a particular, dynamic interplay of elements within the Semiosphere, it can occur in various forms and is likely to be an integral, re-emerging element, an integral force/process of such sphere. In discussing dance in the context of mind (Bateson 1979) and an underlying Semiosphere (Hoffmeyer 1996), no differentiation or allowance can be made in regards to the Cartesian split of body and mind. Dance is treated as a form of thought and thought as a physical act. A cybernetic approach to concepts of ‘thought’ and ‘mind’ combined with Badiou’s and Monni’s writings on dance, offers an extended understanding of the term, unrestrained by its social context, history or choreographic conventions, and discloses what might constitute such ‘figure of thought’.

Both Badiou (2005) and Monni (2004) specifically address dance as a performative human action, and therefore their use of the term ‘body’ is in reference to the human body. This research however, concentrates on an understanding of the body in a cybernetic sense, as an identifiable conglomerate of relations, an open system according to Bateson’s idea of mind. (Bateson 1979), and dance is discussed accordingly. A cybernetic reading of the term ‘body’ redefines the mind/body split accordingly, as Keeney puts it: “This (...) understanding (...) frees us from the bondage of the mind-body duality, where we now have: mind (conversational pattern)/bodies (participants of the conversation).” (Keeney 1983, p. 80)

Therefore, by adopting this system-theoretical view, the term ‘body’ can signify bodies of social groups, ecologies and ideas, each constituting an integral part of a mind (a thought body) in conversations with other bodies (minds). This understanding of ‘body’ in the widest sense does not interfere with the quoted expositions on dance below, but offers an extended view on the subject when read accordingly.

Every genuine instance of thinking is subtracted from the knowledge in which it is constituted. Dance is a metaphor for thought precisely inasmuch as it indicates, by means of the body, that a thought, in the form of its eventual surge, is subtracted from every preexistence of knowledge. How does dance point to this subtraction? Precisely in the manner that the “true’ dancer must never appear to know the dance she dances. Her knowledge (which is technical, immense, and painfully acquired) is traversed, as null, by the pure emergence of her gesture. (...). The dancer is the miraculous forgetting of her own knowledge of dance. (Badiou 2005, p. 66)

Dance is precisely when it is not what it is constructed of, dance is not the sum of its parts, and is much rather described as a figure of thought that points towards the possibility of change within a body. A thought-body in dance, emerging through flexible relations in movement, will settle in renewed constellations, pointing towards the possibility of dance as a subtle agent of change and emergence, or as Badiou puts it poetically “dance is indeed - each and every time - a new name that the body gives to the earth.” (Badiou 2005, p. 71) Dance is nothing more than of the consistency of a spirit - ephemeral, unnamed and non-physical - and in itself carrying nothing more but the possibility of change, as a system can experience and settle in new arrangements after becoming a thought-body in dance. Dance itself does not constitute change, but probably detonates a hidden ingredient in the process of change.

In *Sense and Meaning* (Klien and Giannotti 2007) the choreographer was attempting to provide the performer with the ideal conditions for herself to reach such a state of dance: for herself to become her own forgetting, to be a thought-body that can stretch itself to its full height (Badiou 2005), and for the audience to bear witness to the revelation of a bareness of being, thereby experiencing some of nature's dynamics, processes and patterns that are currently not present in our conscious manner of ordering. Such dance, in Mallarmè words: "offers you the nakedness of your concepts (...) and will silently rewrite your vision." (Badiou 2005, p. 66)

4.3 SENSE AND MEANING – CHOREOGRAPHIC WORK 2007

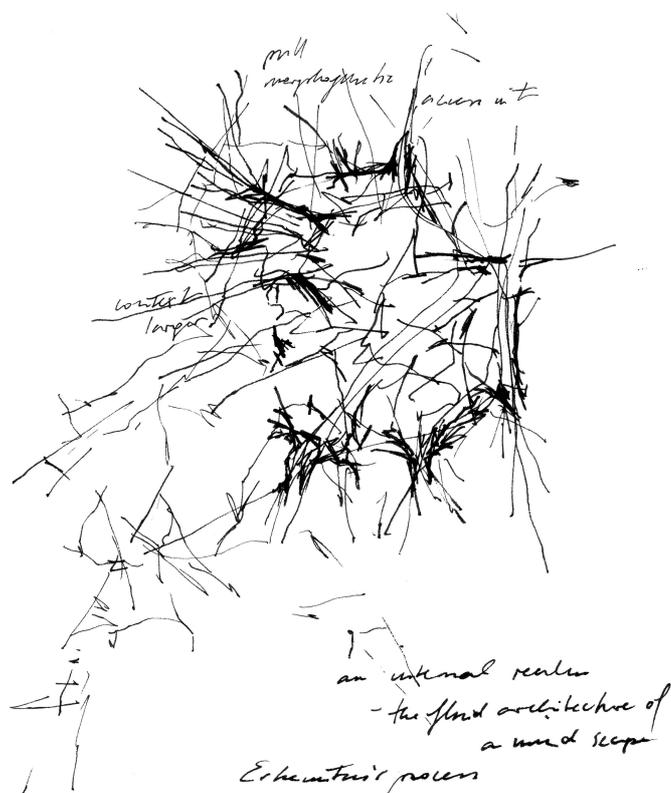


Fig. 3.1: the attempt of mapping 'Sense and Meaning'

Initially, the author and dancer Elena Giannotti were in conversation for over a year, working on the disclosure of reality through dance in a process entitled 'Field Studies'. 'Field Studies' was the heading for a practice-based dialogue on perception and knowledge as it explored issues of reality-creation and world-making. Whenever, wherever, and in whatever manner Klien and Giannotti were looking to observe patterns of their very own existence, as well as attempting to sense their context in an alternative manner, a 'Field Study' was being conducted. As a choreographer, the emphasis on the author's part of the conversation lay on ideas that would pull

perception out of its habitual pathways and for the dancer, the emphasis on her part of the conversation lay on integrating various ideas into her process of thought and movement. However, as the work took its shape out of a continuous conversation, the roles within this conversation were only delineated by individual interest and different tools of enquiry.

Examples of such 'Field Studies' might have been the uninterrupted and concentrated watching of tidal waves (entitled 'wavewatcher') or the quests to manoeuvre oneself into a physical position never experienced before and maintain it till it became familiar (entitled 'cradle of the unknown'). Neither was an attempt made to document or rationalise one's findings nor to contextualise any of these studies. 'Field Studies' was not meant to serve a direct purpose, but aimed to extend one's space for perception, to create the possibility for an opening in consciousness to suspend functional habits and known processes in favour for 'something else', thereby probing consciousness against the vast darkness of the unknown. Movement strategies, text, memories, mental-states and various other procedures grew out of numerous studies, and were presented as relics, as remainders of this process, throughout 2007 in performative settings (17 unique performances, each one between three and twelve minutes).

'Sense and Meaning' (Klien and Giannotti, 2008) was created as a dedicated space/time to present traces of the mental spaces carved out throughout the process of 'Field Studies'. 'Sense and Meaning' bound all 'Field Studies' together within a comprehensive field for embodied thought. The work was not concerned with specific instructions or the resolution of any given problems, but offered a place for

the dancer to immerse herself as a thought-body in this newfound perceptual and mental territory. During each performance Giannotti explored and extended ‘Sense and Meaning’ - her personally manifested territory of thought, evoking the possibility for dance as a transformative force for the spectators, who were exposed to her new perceptual spaces through the lens of her moving thought-body. Giannotti pulled herself out of habitual orbits of thought, revealing new patterns, alternative modes of being, to the audience: a process that harbours the potential to recursively reverberate, in unfathomable ways, through the witnessing collective, thereby manifesting and integrating itself into a larger, social reality, as discussed in Chapter 3. For Giannotti this meant to integrate all of her knowledge, strategies and experience of how to evoke, how to become, such ‘figure of thought’ herself.

The choreographer was neither concerned with setting the ‘dance’ for her, nor ‘interfering’ with the dance by dictating or suggesting compositional tools. The format of a continuous, focussed dialogue between two individuals allowed for new ideas, frames and movements, to rise on an on-going basis. These ideas, strong enough to divert thought from habitual pathways into the unknown, were emerging as a result of evoking and extending new territory of thought, either through communication, reflection or exposure to specific perceptive realms and sensory experiences. There was no other organisational method applied, except the dedicated hour and physical space needed for the dancer to reach a state of dance.

4.4 DANCE AS A FIGURE OF THOUGHT IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY DANCE PRACTICE

‘Dances’ according to ethnochoreologist Drid Williams are “closed systems of mutually agreed, and therefore artificial signs.” (Williams 2004, p. 67). This definition of ‘dance’ refers to dances as social constructs constituted by movement-frames with a multiplicity of meanings depending on the function of such dances in various societies and historical contexts. This approach presents one of the prevalent, old paradigms in dance: assuming that dance, as a system of signs, can be written (Lepecki 2007) and therefore referring to dance within a linguistic framework. As outlined in Chapter 2, this is the corset of language forced upon dance for centuries. Badiou argues that dance defies language by definition suggesting that only poetry can exemplify dance in language, as reasoning and linear-thinking are constantly defied by dance. To write dance certainly imposes the “Spirit of Gravity” (Badiou 2005, p. 57), which according to Nietzsche is the great ‘enemy’ of dance – as does to write ‘about’ it. To give a real glimpse of what is dance in written words seems to be an impossible task. The author can only examine the conditions, propose principles and observe resulting phenomena, but this can never substitute the actual experience of dance. Dance, as referred to in this research is no system, no subject nor object, it is much rather an ephemeral quality or dynamic expressed *in* a system.

Monni (2006) points out that the old paradigm in dance has come about through Western metaphysics, which further manifested itself in the on-going era of Cartesian attitude, perceiving the body as mouldable matter. This research tends

towards a notion of dance as ‘sheltered by philosophy’ (Badiou 2005), in the form of concepts or ideas, and not according to the artistic discipline’s socio-historical traditions and conventions. In Western society dance has been shaped by the dominance of the old Platonic metaphysics. (Monni 2006)

in the realm of true reality e.g. of supra-sensible, of pure ideas, there is no actual lived time, no actual lived place, no real life situation, no mortality; the ideal truth of what is, is timeless and permanent. (...) a dancer’s body been seen as a tool (or instrument) for representing a general idea (through ideal body, one amongst many alike). In the ideal world there is no otherness or difference; there is only sameness, the totality of the right idea. A dancer’s body has been seen as moldable matter for a movement sculptor to shape according to the timeless, permanent and general idea. Within this perspective, the skills of an artist have been considered to be in close affiliation with the techniques of *production*. Accordingly, a choreographer’s skills have been understood as the ability to shape movement and organize moving bodies in space and time to create an aesthetically constructed form, a movement composition, utilizing the motional body as material. (Monni 2006, p. 4)

As previously discussed, most modern and contemporary choreographers such as Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham or William Forsythe are, to various degrees, proprietors of these metaphysics. Dancers are trained and shaped according to the choreographer’s vision and then used as mouldable matter, moving parts to build and represent the choreographer’s vision of the world.

In dance-art the early stages of a paradigm shift, away from perceiving the body as such mouldable matter, have been dispersed throughout the 20th century, mainly through the development of dance-improvisation. The most concentrated episode in ‘rethinking dance’ to date, has been the American postmodern dance in the 1960s and 1970s (Lycouris 1996, Monni 2000) and the development of various strands of dance-improvisation (Banes 2003). A new perspective on dance has been emerging through the work of numerous dance-artists including Steve Paxton, Ann

Halprin, Trisha Brown, Bruce Curtis, Katie Duck, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti and Deborah Hay. Despite the various differences in approaches and manifestations of their art, a common concern in their work presents an emerging new paradigm in dance: the notion of a body moving in thought, a 'thought-body' and 'bodily thinking' (Monni 2006, Gibbs 2003); for a dancer to freshly perceive his/her environment to uncover new patterns and relations (Albright 2003) on pathways of the unknown, rather than performing the known in its various constellations.

I believe the potency of improvisational practice today lies less in the opening up of more movement options (...), but rather in understanding how to encourage a willingness to cross over into uncomfortable territories, to move in the face of fear, of what is unknown. (Cooper Albright 2003, p. 258)

The development of dance-improvisation has touched upon many of the themes raised throughout this research in different forms. Giannotti's performance within 'Sense and Meaning' can be contextualised within the tradition of improvisation. However, as Albright (2003) points out, the notion of improvisation is often and especially in the dance-world, misunderstood, lacking rigour and depth of discourse. Improvisation pitched against choreography (Marks 2003, Webb 2003) exposes such simplified reading of improvisation and choreography clearly, as if 'spontaneous' delineates improvisation and 'set or written' outlines choreography.

Figured as the opposite of choreography, improvisation is seen as free, spontaneous, nontechnical, wild, or childlike, as if one can simply erase years of physical and aesthetic training to become a blank slate onto which one's imagination can project anything. Of course, as seasoned improvisers know, improvisation requires training to open the body to new awareness and sensations, and the imagination to new narrative possibilities. (Albright 2003, p. 261)

As an advanced practice, improvisation, as outlined by Albright, means to release one's thought-body from habitual patterns, through various strategies, whether

approached through notions of improvisational techniques such as Contact Improvisation (Paxton, 2003), Structured Improvisation (Keefe, 2003) or even as Zen Practice (Webb 2003). These methods as well as further individual approaches to improvisation, are practiced by a wide array of dance-artists (such as Katie Duck , Simone Forti, Elena Giannotti, William Forsythe, Deborah Hay, Ann Halprin, Lisa Nelson, Kirstie Simon and Steve Paxton) and are crucial, in light of this research, to educate and equip the dancer with tools to evoke the state of dance within themselves, as according to Giannotti, improvisation “is taught through a series of tools to facilitate awareness” (Giannotti 2008).

These approaches are not opposing choreography as an aesthetics of change, but are complementary and necessary to the process of opening up and revealing deeper patterns and dynamics of reality. Dance improvisation is essential for the dance-artist to expand his/her field of perceptions, thereby sensing, extending and/or deconstructing existing modes of organisations. In light of this, directly relating to Heidegger’s phenomenology, Monni lays out a new paradigm for dance –“as a prime knowledge that opens up a world.”

(Monni 2006, p. 1)

Dance does not utilise space, time, and form like some objectified material but discloses being’s temporal and spatial happening, a kinetic logos, the bodily involvement in being, interpreted through a historically situated world. A moment, in the integrity of the body-mind, in which the instrumental and habitual everyday way of conceiving the body is released into revealing the non-concealed, a poetic manner of being. This makes the *remembering of* and *opening upon* our existential situatedness possible. This kind of dance lays out a world in its involvement with being.

(Monni 2006, p. 1)

For such notions of dance and choreography (outlined in chapter 2) to start or to resume a dialogue – a new collaboration - both with their specific interest and field of engagement, is of essence. A dance-work such as ‘Sense and Meaning’ (Klien, Giannotti 2007) is an expedition into the unknown, and solo expeditions are potentially limited in scope. It needs a team to support the exploration by means of their individual expertise, abilities and tools at their disposal. In ‘Sense and Meaning’, instances of dance and choreography were by no means delineated by a ‘choreographer who choreographs’ and a ‘dancer who dances’. Notions of dance and choreography, as outlined in this research, were present in manifold ways, recursively validating and feeding of each other. The work was an ongoing conversation between two individuals with different concerns as well as means to probe reality, with dynamics of dance characterising the dialogue, and embodied thought-processes revealing a larger choreography of living.

Discussing dance as a figure of thought and as ‘prime knowledge that opens up the world’ (Monni 2006), rather than from its cultural, historical tradition, deviates substantially from dominant Western perception of dance. The old paradigm, sees the body as a form of matter to be shaped and choreography “as a peculiar invention of early modernity, as a technology that creates a body disciplined to move according to the commands of writing.” (Lepecki 2006, p. 6) However, as discussed in Chapter 3, this peculiar invention is merely a mapping of larger dominant imagos of the cosmos (Lawrence 2000) onto the choreographic act and thereby onto the body. Hence, dancers can be analyzed as a social kinetic sculpture in regards to their body and its movement being shaped by dominant social concepts, conventions and overall believe systems. The Cartesian split has disconnected mind and matter and in the doctrine of

‘mind over matter’ has set a hierarchy in the choreographer- dancer relationship as the one who thinks rules over the one who acts.

Yet, there is an increasing movement across all disciplines of human knowing, also coinciding roughly with the advent of System Theory, that has been working towards a more interconnected, holistic imago of the cosmos – a paradigm shift in the understanding of reality. “In an increasingly dynamic, interdependent world it is simply no longer possible for anyone to ‘figure it all out at the top’. The old model, ‘the top thinks and the local acts’, must now give way to integrating thinking and acting at all levels.” (Senge, 1990, p. 395) In this awareness the old role assigned to dance is no longer tenable, standing in direct conflict with the reading of reality, hence a complete reworking and re-sensing of the notion of dance inevitably, while attempting to entangle the body from its Cartesian metaphysical restrictions and ideals.

The new paradigm in dance is an ongoing project appropriating the art form to correspond to an un-folding, newfound reality of interconnectivity of mind and body as well as mind and nature. As a politics of revelation comes into being (Lawrence 2000), so is the discipline of dance concerned with its ability to disclose reality. The shift in thinking is particularly evident in as much as the body is no longer viewed “as material for representation of supra-sensible themes or ideas, but it is also understood that an individual’s perceptive action and conscious movement in itself, is a unique way of thinking and, therefore possesses a power for disclosure of reality.” (Monni 2004)

Over the centuries dance-art has widely been understood in Western cultures as the execution of guidelines, the learning of a pre-configured, growing movement repertoire that is, according to the choreographer, accurately performed under specific contexts such as clearly marked performative, social situations. “for Nietzsche such a body is the opposite of the dancing body, of the body that internal exchanges the earth with the air. What, in Nietzsche’s eyes, is the opposite of dance? [...] “Obedience and long legs.” (Badiou 2005, p. 59) The dominant conception of western contemporary dance following the old-paradigm, can generally be located in direct opposition to Nietzsche’s understanding of dance and is more likely to be affiliated with ‘Obedience and long legs’ (Badiou 2005) - dance as a metaphor for the submission, rather than the *one*, of thought. A notion of ‘submission of thought’ emerges, if what is referred to as a figure of thought in the new paradigm, is one of submission in the old. Similarly the author’s hypothesis that the way society has related to and contextualised dance has always been in line with the way in which society has dealt with the unknown, the *unframeable*, and the spiritual. A ‘choreography of salvation’ has imposed rigid frames upon dance, representing the embodiment of cultural repression of that what is not to be governed by conscious and collective will.

The old paradigm of choreography is limiting the space of movement, trapping the body in various moulds, whether in the form of a classical arabesque, a pre-shaped movement by a choreographer or a superimposed timeframe. This trapping of relations formulates an economics of rigidity rather than one of flexibility (Bateson 1991), and thereby reducing the possibility for a state of dance to ‘emerge’.

Although most practices of well known choreographers (such as Matthew Bourne, Akram Kahn, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jiří Kylián, Wayne McGregor, Mark Morris, Roland Petit) would currently subscribe to a ‘choreography of salvation’, it has to be noted that William Forsythe in his later work changed his own practice and started to experiment with providing conditions for the performers’ movement to form itself. Works to be pointed out are ‘Scattered Crowd’ (Forsythe 2001), whereby a room was filled with 7,000 white helium-balloons whilst audiences manoeuvred amongst them, and ‘Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time’ (Forsythe 2005), a work that (initially) allowed dancers to freely negotiate a space full of moving pendulums

Similar to the relation of the map versus the territory (Bateson 2000), forms of technique are mostly a mapping of dance according to the dominant perceptions of reality. Such maps are not the dance itself, and the two terms should never be confused. Body-technologies and dance forms, such as Ballet and Modern Dance might have evolved with the intention to enable a state of dance, however, it has been often assumed by practitioners, as well as by audiences, that the coordinated system of movement itself is dance. This is a dominant misconception of dance. Ballet itself is not dance neither is any body-technology or framework governing movement. Established rule-books of dance techniques, even in its loosest form, might offer a potential vessel for dance - but at the same time they constitute a considerable hindrance for dance, as a figure of thought, to emerge, as

the body has been shrunk to the framework of an image, representing something which is not its essence. Moreover, a long-term training process might have been imposed on the body to produce a certain image in which its own potential identity is denied. Thus it may have lost its ability to radiate any pre-communicative meanings (...) (Parviainen 1998, p. 157)

Dance is an ephemeral state of a body demonstrating flexibility within - the showing of “a non-committed potential for change.” (Bateson 2000, p. 401), and must therefore, according to Nietzsche, (Badiou 2005) be free from ‘every spirit of gravity’, and such gravity might be constituted by an over-exposure to, or over-reliance of, a specific movement technique.

Western Cartesian metaphysics have turned the idea of dance, as a figure of thought, into a perversion of itself, applying to and onto it, everything that will prohibit its existence. The reasons for this are manifold and to be found in the dominant, traditional reading of the world that split consciousness from the body and sees human beings in charge of their environment and their destiny (Lawrence 2000). In such reality a strong need might emerge to encapsulate that, which is ephemeral and to artificially prolong what only exists in presence. Maybe the reasons, apart from the historical conditions, are to be found in the dominant muddle of language, which, in Bateson’s words, “stops us from thinking straight.” (Bateson 1988, p. 33) Dance as a figure of thought must resist any attempts of cultivation, from language or otherwise:

I believe thought must take a step back. A step toward what Mallarme and the pre-Islamic ode have in common, to wit: the desert, the ocean, the bare place, the void. We must recompose, for our time, a thinking of truth that would be articulated onto the void without passing through the figure of the master: Neither through the master sacrificed nor through the master invoked. (Badiou 2005)

Dance has been engaged, limited and prevented by conventional choreography for centuries. It is time to release the hold of individuals and their practice on ‘dance’

and find ways to let it simply be, recognising the knowledge it can reveal to us as a practitioner and/or spectator.

4.5 SUMMARY

Adopting a cybernetic view of thought, mind and body allows the writings of Badiou and Monni to be further contextualised and developed. Dance is not only a metaphor for thought as Badiou suggests, but the context of System Theory and the concept of mind (Bateson 1979) becomes thought itself - a specific form or figure of thought: that of a thought-body inscribing its potential for change. All minds have the potential to dance. Consciousness will do so in dreams, liquefying systemic habits by reverting to a more primal state of being, where things are still possible and untainted. Dance is probably a pre-condition in a complex system for mental health *and* art. In the new-paradigm, dance embraces a politics of revelation (Lawrence 2000) and no longer “diligently conducts a building project of the world, but rather stops mechanical building and begins a poetic living – a hearing and sharing the common being-in-the-world with the creatures of the world.” (Monni 2006, p. 9) Pointing towards the unknown place of unison and beyond separation it embraces the sacred (Bateson 1987) to simultaneously reveal it to the one’s perceiving it with the ‘absolute gaze’ (Badiou 2005).

Dance is a form of certain configuration of thoughts, expressed in manifold ways by the birth of idea or the shivering of a body. That is why evolution, animals and states are said to be dancing at times, because certain conditions are met allowing a system to be flexible and its emerging dancing body to be, in Badiou’s terms, naked, anonymous and self-less. This is what constitutes dance. (Klien 2006)

Since dance, as described by Badiou, points towards the possibility of art as inscribed in the body, an extended cybernetic view of dance points towards the possibility of change as inscribed in a body. Dance thereby becomes an integral part of the wider

processes within Jung's word of 'Creatura' (Bateson 1979), the world of the living. Dance takes its part in signalling the possibility for change, while laying out its ungovernable nature, as the attempt to regulate it, spells its demise. Dance as a figure of thought requires a choreography of revelation, to clear obstacles and to offer space, an act of clearing and offering.

I am not interested in your notions of choreography, constellations of relations that belong to the world of solid distinctions. My choreography is not about the arrangement of inanimate objects, nor is it about controlling the fate of human beings in the space-time continuum. This work is far removed from patterns of creation solely designed for the pleasures of instant digestion and assimilation. There is no challenge and nothing at stake in creating only for the affirmation and reproduction of an established order. Your truth doesn't interest me, I know nothing of substance and I am stumped by what you call reality. (Klien, Valk, Gormly 2008)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 OUTCOME

This thesis traces the development of choreography as a new aesthetics. It presents an encompassing realignment of the ontological basis of choreography and subsequently dance, via the contextualization of the field within a wider realm of human knowing, as well as the subsequent and simultaneous advances of choreographic methodology. Since its inception in the 16th century (Lepecki 2006) the notion of choreography has carried a number of different meanings, from delineating early forms of dance-notation, to the creative act of determining a series of human movements in time and space, to later embrace the entire staging and creation of artistic dance-pieces during the second half of the 20th century. System-theoretical advances, especially focusing on the influence of Gregory Bateson's ideas, form the basis for the formulation of choreography as an aesthetics of change. Introducing System Theory and thereby notions of complexity, interconnectedness, recursivity, and foremost the notion of mind (Bateson 2002) to the creative act of ordering movement, the process as well as the resulting work are transformed into a dynamic ones, shifting the notion of choreography towards a form of art that not only deals with the creation and manipulation of systems of rules organising the evolving arrangement of energy, but also does so in a non-deterministic, open way. Here two paradigm shifts in thinking about choreography show themselves, firstly, that choreography is by no means a hierarchical affair, whereby a choreographer and his/her ideas govern subservient dancers, and secondly, that the act of choreography is

not necessarily to be contained in the discipline of dance, nor by the dimension of the stage.

As part of this thesis, a series of choreographic works provided, and in retrospect demonstrated, the theoretical and methodological advances in the fields of choreography and dance. This development can be sketched out in three stages.

Firstly, the introduction of a new choreographic technique that constructed artefacts out of pre-fixed rules, primarily based on modelling procedures of complexity theory, i.e. in the choreography of 'Nodding Dog'.

The second stage developed choreographic methods to create work aimed at the gathering of, and building upon, regularities of thought and its physical manifestations. The performer had to assume his/her position with the larger framework of relations, as his/her action and ideas became the building block for further action. Emerging laws and assumptions had to be obeyed and respected by the performer, if he/she wanted to maintain and grow the overall structure of relations developed during the process, i.e. in 'Sediments of an Ordinary Mind'. At this stage rules emerged during as well as at the end of the process, rather than formulating a restricted field of possibilities in the beginning, that is then being played out by dancers acting as intelligent agents.

In the third stage of development the choreographic technique emancipated: the choreographic act was no longer 'to write' its creation. This reconfigured notion of choreography was no longer concerned with the creation of discreet entities, but

with the provision of the conditions for something to happen: for dynamics, such as dance, to emerge and to manifest themselves on pathways of the unknown.

Throughout all these stages of the practical as well as theoretical development, choreography was demonstrated as a ‘process of order’ rather than an ‘instance of order’, consciously imposed or subconsciously assumed.

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

As an aesthetics, a sensitive knowing, the discipline of choreography can be applied to inquire into the dance of life, effortlessly merging observation, theoretical writing and philosophy with practical rigor and personal expression to create works of art. The stage becomes a laboratory, the laboratory a stage for the governing and steering of existing mind-dynamics and processes, whether physically expressed such

as a human body or a flower, or not, such as evolution or learning. Applying the aesthetics of choreography as a purposeful, creative and pro-active tool upon the surface of reality embodies a healthy disregard for established boundaries which have arisen in fields of human knowledge production such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, education, religion, biology and history. 'Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change' engages everyone's perception and knowledge of 'how things move' and 'what difference can make what difference', inquiring if and how individuals can bring about change: imaginatively ordering and re-ordering aspects of their personal, social, cultural and political lives. It proposes the role of choreographer as one of an active agent of change within an ever-changing environment.

A new, extended understanding of choreography as an autonomous field of human knowledge and creation, as formulated in this thesis, necessarily bears direct consequences for the discipline of dance, due to the field's close connections on many historical, practical and conceptual levels. The writings of Monni and Badiou have been integrated and adapted to sketch out a new paradigm for dance, whereby dance is not defined nor constructed via pre-existing modules of movement, but as manoeuvring life in modes of metaphors, a poetic living rather than mechanical building. This thesis establishes dance as 'a figure of thought', a profound and necessary dynamic in the fabric of life, a process that potentially liquefies general habits in any systems that show mental characteristics according to Bateson's theory of mind (Bateson 2002), whether a human being, a nation-state or evolution. This way dance is described as the disclosure of a flexible, un-committed thought-body, in its very moment of existence, inscribed with a potential for change on pathways of the unknown.

The way our culture has choreographed dance has always been reflective of the larger tendencies of how we, as a society, deal with the unknown, the unframable, the foreign, the spiritual and the animal. Conventional arrangements – those of streets, school exams, chains of command and soldiering performers – impose rigid frames upon dance. These systems are the embodiment of fear and the cultural suppression of that which is governed neither by subjective nor collective will. Our premise must not be to constrain movement into a set pattern, but rather to provide a cradle for movement to find its own patterns - over and over again; to preserve a body, whether bound by skin or habits, from stagnation; to enable lightness and primal energy, possibilities only found once relations start dancing.
(Klien, Valk, Gormly 2008)

These findings not only require a rethinking and exploration of how dance is being choreographed, but more generally, how order is imposed on living systems, and how the creative act of choreography is foremost a political one, artificially setting relations between people, whether through direct acts of interventions or via rules and their resulting consequences, i.e. conventions. Here, building on writings by Lawrence, the entanglement of perception and imagination shows its bearings and the dominant assumptions and failures of current modes of ordering are deciphered. How ones cosmos is perceived, how order is deducted from one's context, has direct implications to what processes of ordering are readily available for acts of conscious or unconscious creation. The dominant mode of creation, according to a 'Politics of Salvation' (Lawrence 2000), reduces nature to mechanistic principles and inbuilt hierarchical power structures. This particular manner of perception leads to a choreographic act, that mirrors one's imago of the cosmos, following mechanistic and hierarchical processes that affect ever aspect of creation, from the actual processes applied to the assumptions these processes are employed upon, such as the sub-servant role of the dancer vis-à-vis the choreographer, with little or non authority on their part to change the 'given' order. This dominant form of the choreographic act in

the ‘old paradigm’ shows itself in patterns of mass-production, capitalism and most dance productions within the Western world.

This thesis, however, proposes and describes a ‘choreography of revelation’ versus the one of salvation, building on an imago of the cosmos, that is relying upon a radically subjective mode of perception, a re-sensed relation to one’s context, building upon an ecological world-view as described by Bateson, Hoffmeyer, Lawrence and many others. A reading of the world in its total interdependence and interconnectedness of everything with everything else, a sacred ecology that any creator shares within and acts upon.

Choreography itself becomes a way of seeing the world, perceiving patterns, relations and proportionalities. The act of such choreography is one of continuous ordering and creation in direct response to and intertwined with a continuously unfolding knowledge through action and simultaneous observation. A ‘choreography of revelation’ knows nothing of dance written by the will of a choreographer, it knows nothing of imposing nor projecting one’s order onto a larger fabric, it is much more a choreography of offering, one of submission: preparing the ground for a thought-body to reveal itself in dance, “to disclose a prime knowledge that opens up the world.” (Monni 2006)

This new paradigm in choreography, the shift from the illusion of subjecting movement and its originators to one’s control, to a notion of clearing and providing ‘relations in movement’ with the conditions to grow, dance and propagate. This is the true dimension of a choreography as an aesthetics: to see a world in terms of relations

and its dynamics, to understand that this world is of continuous change, and to grasp the consequences, potential and possibilities of one's action upon the larger fabric of life. To understand that one's repertoire for building, ordering and creating is directly delineated by ones ability to sense, observe as well as to be a conscious part of that very fabric.

5.2 FURTHER RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The thesis main objective, the establishment of choreography as an aesthetics of change, has now to be followed up by a series of further research conducted in the field.

For the aesthetics of choreography to further assert itself it must boldly strive to find new fields of engagements, extending far beyond its current existence within the realm of cultural productions. Choreography as a mode of governance requires serious consideration, examining ordering procedures in the social sphere from an aesthetic base in stark contrast to notions of social engineering. Rather than being taught at various colleges as part of the field of dance, choreography, as outlined in this thesis, should be established as an academic discipline in its own right, assuming a radical inter-disciplinary role, engaging and contributing to various fields of human knowledge productions. Outside academia, as part of this research project, choreography has already started to attract a wide-ranging interest of interdisciplinary thinkers, such as Lawrence (Gormly (ed.) 2008), Steier and Harries-Jones.

Furthermore is it to be researched how consciously formed movement, created within the framework of 'the known', can, if at all, contribute to a disclosure of the world. What is the significance of such consciously arranged movement in relations to a lived world, if not only to propagate existing modes of organisation? To what degree can dance, be written by an individual, when dance, as perceived in Western culture, has been written already by tradition, images of the body, conventions, and

other evolutionary forces of nature? How is one to speak of ‘a’ choreography, when at all times a series of forces and ideas, whether social, cultural or economic, will always be at play? What delineates ‘a’ choreography from the on-going, ever-present choreographies that form its context?

In terms of dance it is proposed that new methodologies and new forms of training are established to further complement the notion of ‘dance as a figure of thought’ as described in this thesis. This could include the creation of original, holistic ways of training the dancer to, at times, assume a thought-body in a state of dance. The question of ‘what constitutes an accomplished dancer’ should also be given further attention.

5.3 WHEN THE CURTAINS FALL ON YOUR SWAN LAKE

While mankind has made continual advances in its control over nature and may expect to make still greater ones, it is not possible to establish with certainty that similar advance has been made in the management of human affairs, and probably at all periods, just as now once again, many people have asked themselves whether what little civilization has this acquired is indeed worth defending at all. One would think that a re-ordering of human relations should be possible (...). (Freud 1927 p. 4)

Although written by Freud in 1927, this statement is as relevant as ever. For a re-ordering of human relations to take place, one can no longer pursue the route of a ‘politics of salvation, as this route has failed to acknowledge the ecological reality one’s actions are contained within.

Some of us are now aware that despite the enormous triumphs of technology, which have suffused our language and consciousness while transforming our lives, technology is based on an inadequate system of perception and understanding of the nature of reality. Despite man knowing that this traditional path is likely to bring disaster, should (...) the “politics of salvation” fail, he cannot turn back; indeed, he is compelled to go forward in his terms. (Lawrence 2000 p187)

It is time for a different choreographic act, one that has its cradle in this thesis. Life is spreading and we are its agents. Humans did not invent thought. They are a product of thought. Thought has been played out over millions, billions of years across endless animate and inanimate minds. The question that poses itself is how to interact with the thought that thinks us and how to govern and direct such thoughts so we can produce conducive, sustainable life-giving spaces. These are the core questions of the field choreography, assuming the role of what Bateson described as ‘Ecology of Mind’:

A new way of thinking about the nature of order and organisation in living systems, a unified body of theory so encompassing that it illuminates all particular areas of study of biology and behaviour. It is interdisciplinary, not in the usual and simple sense of exchanging information across lines of discipline, but in discovering patterns common to many disciplines. (Bateson 1991, p. xii)

The choreographic act as introduced in this thesis offers not just a new way of thinking about order, but pro-actively applies, from an aesthetic base, this new order upon and within such an ecology of mind.

AIM – STEER – HOPE

Finally, perceiving choreography is foremost an exercise of trust. In the role of creator one must trust in one's subjective experience of perception, showing conviction in one's very own sensitive knowing and follow the lead where one's intuition points to. In the role of observer and dancer one must envision choreography as an invisible art. In the existence of deeper relations, outside one's perceptive grasp, showing faith in hidden connections and the vast darkness of the unknown.

It is time to stop choreographing Swan Lakes and timetables! It is causing me pain. In your quest for innovation you innovate nothing; only perpetuate breeding ground for the old. When the curtain falls on your Swan Lake, your nation's walls will be even taller, and all candles will have burned out. All you do is propagate existing patterns throughout the living matrix, taking part in dominant modes of organization. You are the State and your ancestors' minds: written patterns in your flesh and thoughts. Assume responsibilities for your being and your imagination. You are pattern, you are thought, none of which you have thought yourself. There is a future to be created. Your choreographies build our meaning and your creations - a picnic, a child or a garden – matter to me. Take time to sense your context. It charts the boundaries of your imagination. Only fools go marching on – the wise ones dance. (Klien,Valk, Gormly 2008)

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APPENDIX 1

'THE CHOREOGRAPH'

The article 'The ChoreoGraph' outlines the development of a digital tool supporting a non-linear choreographic process in 1998 and 1999. This development was undertaken by the arts-collective 'Barriedale Operahouse' and headed by Michael Klien, Volkmar Klien and Nick Mortimore.

Klien, M. and Mortimore, N., (1999), ChoreoGraph –Non-Linear Choreography & Fluid Environments, *Performance Research Journal* , Vol. 4, No.2, UK: *Routledge*

Reviews

‘The ChoreoGraph’

Non-linear Choreography and Fluid Environments

*Michael Klien and Nicholas
Mortimore*

Make maps, not photos or drawings.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 25)

Software packages created or adopted for choreographic use, such as ‘Life Forms’, tend to focus directly on movement creation or capture. ‘The ChoreoGraph’ focuses instead on the structuring of elements/modules for a choreographic piece responding to the growing need for a basic digital planning and control platform supporting the process of choreographic direction. This software will allow choreographers/directors to engage with the master planning of a piece as well as to concentrate on individual elements within the overall structure.

There are three strands to this software. Firstly it will present (in its finished form) the first intuitive scripting platform centralizing the most useful features for time-based event planning from programs like CAD, multimedia authoring tools (such as ‘Director’) and word-processors around a sequencer format. Secondly it will serve as an academic tool for the analysis, reconstruction and recording of performances. Thirdly it will provide a cross-media cue and control tool.

Although ‘The ChoreoGraph’ has the potential to

extend the possibilities of live performance it does not aim to determine the artistic process of choreography/direction, but aims to support a wide range of working methods, whether they are perceived as traditional or absurd in their creative process.

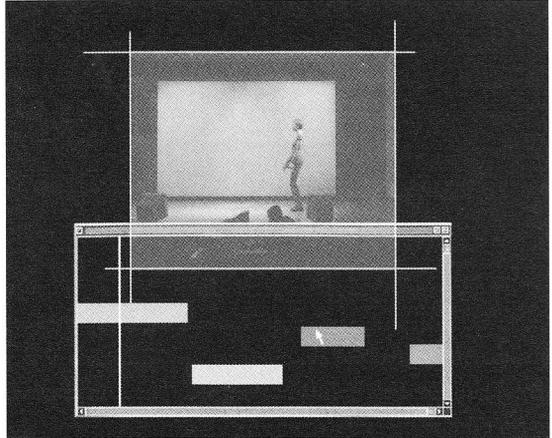
The interface of ‘The ChoreoGraph’ acts as an intuitive digital planning/scripting sketchbook for live events. The director/choreographer can configure visual representations (modules) of media sequences (live-action, lighting, visuals, audio, etc.) and then drop them along a timeline. These modules can then be moved around along this timeline. During performance or rehearsals the planning sketchbook can act as a visual cue-sheet for technicians as well as performers. The cues may notify performers via monitors and/or can cause ‘The ChoreoGraph’ to trigger the playback of sequences such as sound, stills or animation. These sequences are represented and stored as modules in a digital format for retrieval. MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is also used to communicate with other hard/software. Digitizing and centralizing aspects of media control will also

encourage the use of multimedia in small to mid-scale productions resulting in shorter, easier buildup and less manpower.

One of ‘The ChoreoGraph’'s most challenging and exciting attributes is its ability to control equipment and update a performer (via monitors and sound cues, etc.) in ‘real time’, during the performance. This opens up a new world to the choreographer/director as nothing needs to be fixed/finalized any longer – all elements of the piece are relative to one another and so can begin reacting to their specific environments – using sensors, chance procedures, human input and so on.

This real-time capability allows for spontaneous insertion of new modules and manipulation of existing ones, so that the resulting creative possibilities encourage a rethink of the way performances are traditionally structured. Questions of authorship are raised – who controls what and what is controlled when. An open architecture of the visual interface will allow the control to be shifted between creator, executioner and/or an audience. This allows for a range of approaches from the ‘dictatorial’ (the creator controls every aspect of the performance), simple audience interactions (triggering light sources, etc.) to very complex constructs of performance control.

To demonstrate the potential of this software Barriedale Operahouse has developed a software-study programmed in MAX (Opcode Sys), which premiered in their installation piece *Solo One*. This is a performance (as well as an ongoing development project) for one dancer and a choreographer. It initially consists of eight colour-coded modules, each of which represents a choreographic sequence and a specific segment of music. Once the piece is running, the choreographer places those modules along a timeline, which can be read by the dancer via computer monitors on stage. The structure can now be changed at any time by simply rearranging the sequences along the timeline. With this in mind, each module is made relative to the other modules, as the transitions are ambiguous. Some of the modules are



created so they can overlap with other modules; this requires a highly skilled and assertive dancer, as well as a careful approach in choreographing and composing those modules. This early exploration of non-linear choreography already allows the decision-making to be allocated to any of those participating, i.e. the choreographer, performer, audience or the computer itself. For example, the dancer can overrule the choreographer's decision by triggering floor sensors – resetting the structure to the performer's needs. It can also be set so that the computer can independently arrange the modules according to prior specified algorithms, such as audience movements tracked by existing motion-tracking tools like ‘BigEye’.¹

Imagine *Solo One* as something of an initial demonstration of a performance concept,² which could hypothetically use six performers, four video-projectors, live-musicians, etc., produced with ‘The ChoreoGraph’s real-time capabilities in mind. This performance follows certain rules of information distribution, responsibilities of its members and predetermined levels of freedom to follow or not to follow the instructions given on the monitors and these parameters guide its creation. Readers and authors (including the performers themselves) can have predetermined levels of power to influence the content on the screen of the other participants, which is in other words the ability to influence the evolution of the performance.

This hypothetical piece could be described as an

active, morphing rhizome,³ which forms its text as it happens. It would be a 'shapeless but active rhizome of moving textualities' with the ability to appear and react to its environment in an organic way. This performance would be a non-linear progression with no predictable outcome – a fluid environment.

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it, we will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicity its own are inserted and metamorphosed. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 4)

Non-linear choreography could be alternatively described as an environment. It is an environment which sculpts/moulds a map of occurrences and connections. This is a fluid environment/ map, which tenuously seeks out rhizomes between actions both intrinsic and extrinsic. It is not a reproduction, it is not an invention but a map.

What 'The ChoreoGraph' allows for is a process of non-linear choreography to evolve not just in the final phases of production but throughout the creative process. This process (mapping) begins with the choreographer/director's ideas being visually represented on a user-friendly interface, which colludes with the performance infrastructure.

How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 24)

As the process continues, ideas, accidents, extraneous influences are recorded and have their effect. These effects can be physical, conceptual, technological and theoretical. Subsequently, when we use the phrase 'the final product', we will refer to the visual manifesting in a live setting of this mapping procedure.

In respect of this, choreography and event scripting (non-linear choreography) will take a new and revised role, namely in the archiving of instantly retrievable information (movement, audio and visual), the intertwining of control-parameters, and the actual retrieval of information.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

'The ChoreoGraph's development has been supported so far by TEST; ARTEC and the GDA. Thanks to Volkmar Klien, Joukje Kolff, Kasia Korczak, Richard Bleasdale, who have all been involved in developing, shaping and designing this software.

NOTES

- 1 'BigEye' is a motion tracking device developed by STEIM, the studio for electro-instrumental music based in Amsterdam.
- 2 The full evening performance *dualdev*, which will utilize real-time structuring procedures, is currently in development by the Barriedale Operahouse and will premiere in 2000.
- 3 'Let us summarize the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs and even nonsign states' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 21).

REFERENCE

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APPENIX 1

NODDING DOG

Credits, Additional Information and Recording (DVD1)

‘Nodding Dog’ presented a ‘non-linear’ choreographic system that aimed to explore the potential of Complexity- and System Theory for the creative process of choreography.

CREDITS

Choreography: Michael Klien, Nicholas Mortimore, Davide Terlingo

Music: Volkmar Klien

Software: Nick Rothwell

Dancers: Ensemble of the Volksoperballet, Wien

Musicians: Orchestra of the Volksoper, Wien

Duration: 1 hour 20 minutes

Produced by the Volksoper Wien (2001)

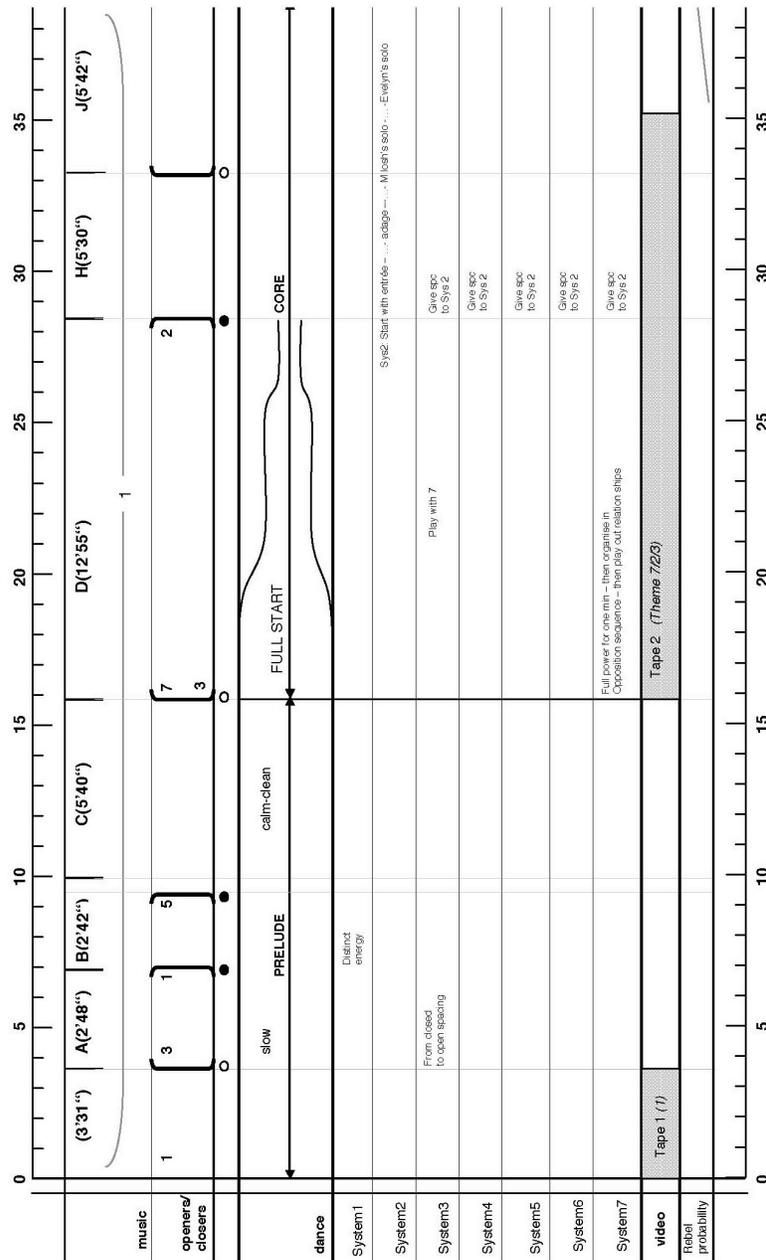


image: Michael Klien

Key to the structural graph

Each bracket along the timeline either symbolizes the opening ([) or closure (]) of sets of rules forming choreographic sub-systems. Each number within a '[' bracket indicates to the dancers which set of rules opens at that moment. Numbers within a ']' bracket indicate the set of rules that do not close, thereby creating a bottleneck situation in the choreographic structure, enabling the choreographers to avoid runaway parameters and maintain some sort of structural-control. All open sub-systems 'compete' at any given time on stage, involving different dancers. Open sub-systems that have no dancers left on stage automatically close.

The Timeline and the brackets are displayed to the dancers via monitors on stage in real-time. The grey brackets are placed randomly on to the timeline by the computer.

APPENDIX 3

DUPLEX

Credits, Additional Information and Recording (DVD2)

‘Duplex’ was the first ‘Pas De Deux’ choreographed following non-linear choreographic methodologies, featuring the integration of a custom-made digital compositional tool into a choreographic process.

CREDITS

Choreography: Michael Klien
Dancers: Jone San Martin, Fabrice Mazliah
Composition: Volkmar Klien
Software: Nick Rothwell, Michael Klien
Duration: 35 min
Produced by Ballett Frankfurt (2002)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: PROGRAMME-NOTES

,a contemporary interface for an illustration of two peoples intimate relationship'

'Duplex' is a choreographic framework in which two people establish and explore their relationship each time anew. Of where they stand in love, hate, respect, dependency and similar attributes vis-à-vis each other. And where they stand together vis-à-vis the audience. A basic structure underlies this process, that of a classical Pas de Deux consisting of an entrée, an adage, a solo for dancer1, a solo for dancer2 and a coda.

'Duplex' has been commissioned and produced 2001/02 by Ballett Frankfurt (www.ballett-frankfurt.de) and premiered at the TAT on March 6th 2002. The production has been supported by the ACE (Arts Council of England) and the TQW Vienna.

APPENDIX 4

EINEM...Twelve Minutes of Her Mind

Credits, Additional Information and Recording (DVD2)

‘Einem...Twelve Minutes of Her Mind’ is a dance solo that integrates a custom-made digital, algorithmic structuring device, enabling the incorporation of learning dynamics into the choreographic process.

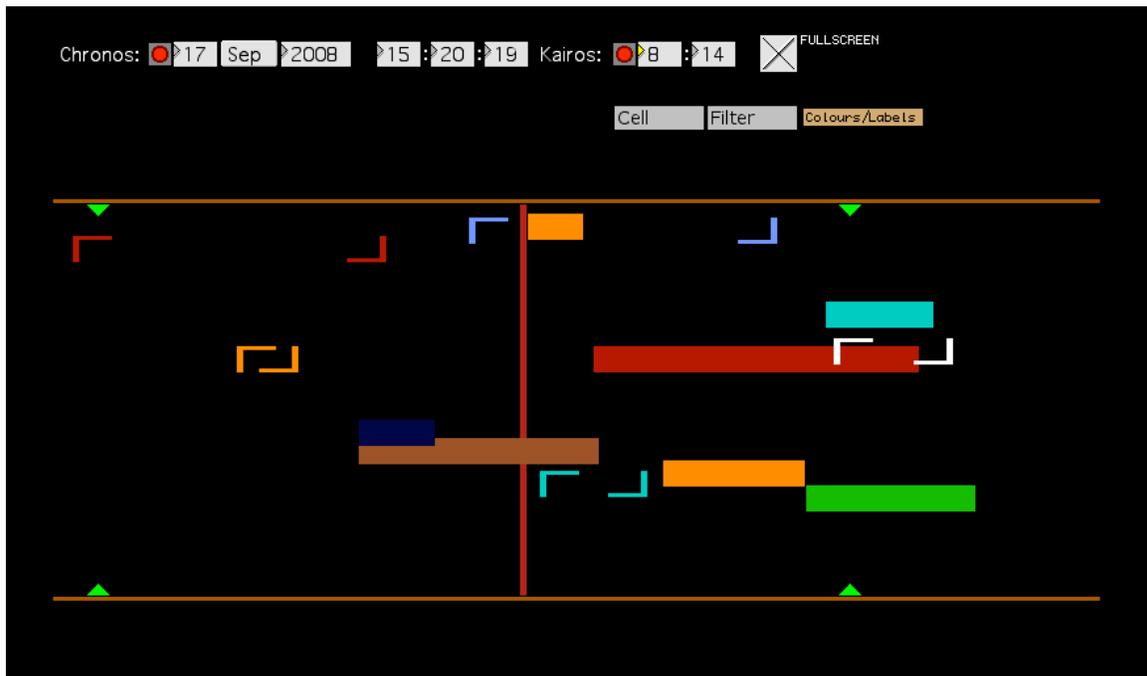
CREDITS

Choreography: Michael Klien
Dancer: Nicole Peisl
Composition: Volkmar Klien
Software: Nick Rothwell, Michael Klien
Duration: 20 min
Produced by Ballett Frankfurt (2002)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: SCENARIO

The dancer is given a laptop with the installed software for ‘Einem’. The software interface consists of a graphic window with visual signs in the shape of blocks and brackets (see fig.1). These symbols, representative of choreographic structural elements,

are in constant motion. It is the dancer's responsibility 'to take care' of the various symbols/modules by individually clicking on them (literally clicking on them with the mouse). Modules that are cared for survive longer, whereas visual signs that are not cared for slowly sink to the bottom of the window and disappear. There always has to be a pre-configured number of symbols floating in the window. If that number is too low the software will ask the dancer to create another symbol/module, which will then be launched into the pool. During the performance the whole visual script is displayed to the dancer via monitors, and a red line scrolls across the main window visualizing the present state.



App. 3: fig. 1: Software-Interface programmed in Max/MSP

APPENDIX 5

IM FETT

Credits, Additional Information and Recording (DVD2)

‘Im Fett’ is a choreography that systematically integrates the dancer’s thought processes into the work. The work is taught and communicated via a written-script. In the recording version of ‘Im Fett’ the work is presented as a duet.

CREDITS

Choreography/Script: Michael Klien

Dancer: Nicole Peisl, Davide Terlingo

Music: Volkmar Klien

Duration: 6 min

Produced by Daghdha Dance Company (2003/2004)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: SCRIPT

IM FETT – SCRIPT

Written by Michael Klien, Daghdha Dance Company, 2003

Proposition

This piece of mental Fett is constructed in time-steps, partly discreet, partly fused. There are four major parts broken up by three, so-called ‘thoughtbreaks’.

Preparation

None in particular – remember the third part of your last run

Part One: THE SLOW FOCUS IN

- 1) Do something... start moving – music starts beforehand, then or after.
- 2) Think of yesterday: How was the day – adjust the quality of movement to your feelings. You can lose the quality as you go along if you choose to do so.
- 3) Start remembering the day along a timeline in physical space, whereby upstage represents the morning, downstage the evening. Keep your movement roughly along the imaginary line (x-axis of the room).

4) Put events/ideas of events in 'projected containers' along the timeline, this does not have to happen in a chronological order, but can be mixed up in time. Only sketch the containers according to a few basic parameters:

- size: how important was that in the day
- consistency: how did it feel at that stage
- boarder: how does it feel now
- shape: representing some of the concerned action

This list is only indicative and can be adjusted according to personal preferences.

5) As you continue sketching your yesterday along the line observe your thoughts and extrapolate a feature that is, to various degrees, represent able of yourself; ie: always falling asleep in front of the TV, always creating double-bind situations for your sister, etc. and conduct a sketchy mapping, create a choreographic container, of your feature according to the method above. Keep this fuzzy and sketchy and along the line in space you have been moving on (without any special reference to time).

Thoughtbreak

1) Stop and think about the particular feature that is you. Map that feature in your mind in a clear manner according to the following parameter:

- size: how typically you/how telling (max = your own Kinesphere)
- movement of container: domination/submission
- boarder/consistency: how do you feel about it
- shape: intuitive

2) Where is that container in space – place it/project it – use the x-axis of the stage to indicate when this feature appeared first time taking upstage as your first day of memory and downstage of now. Judge the y-axis position of the container according to your intuition.

3) Ask yourself ‘why?’ – short, but intense brainstorms...

Part Two: OF A SHARP FEATURE

1) Go to the chosen place on stage and clearly paint out the feature, extrapolated above, in physical space. Be as precise and concrete as your feature allows you to do. Use all of your physical capabilities to do so. Paint yourself a comprehensive picture of your feature. Once satisfied ask yourself...

2) ...why? Leave your immediate physical realm/choreographic cell to explore the context of your feature. Take a series of paths away from your choreographic container, tentatively mapping associations gathered in the previous Thoughtbreak (‘why?’), into projected containers only to return to point 1.

3) Ask yourself how you deal and/or would like to deal with this feature and relate to its physical map accordingly; i.e. ignore, destroy, acknowledge, deconstruct, ...

Comment: the feature might be of a fuzzy or undefined nature, according to its mental referent... just be clear on the quality without being sketchy.

Thoughtbreak

Project all physical realms of past runs into the space and remember their properties.

Part Three: POOL OF FEATURES/REPERTOIRE/CENSUS

Move ‘through’ your pool of features, which might be scattered as mental projection across the stage. You know where you are going. No more base-level exploration – moving quickly through the pools, right through some – just brushing others.

Comment: Use your built-up repertoire of movement as a strategy of census if needed. Let your memory be your guidance accepting that some movements have more weight in your memory than others. Apply the same technique to the overall pool of features. Do not force yourself to include all features – do not write anything down – only try to remember the ones you have done. Longer waves in your mind will last longer anyway.

Thoughtbreak

Move to your momentarily favourite point on stage and stop. Have all mental projections as outlined by yourself in Part Three ‘move’, zoom towards you.

Part Four: THE HOPELESS SIMPLIFICATION OF SELF

You are now the centre-point in a sea of ‘descriptions of yourself’. Choose one movement out of every feature, guided by your memory, and generate a new movement for the feature of this particular run. Repeat the movements in, for this run, a particular order till they form a little sequence, a sentence. Find simple transitions between the movements and repeat the full ‘sentence’ at least twice. Then start dissolving the set order of the movements into a random one. Whilst doing that you can scale the movements down (limiting your movement-range). Once you have randomised the movement order completely think of tomorrow. How will it be... stop after a while. Music ends before, then or after.

Comment: Try to remember all the movements chosen for each particular feature. Do not write anything down. Do not repeat or rehearse the movements outside a run of ‘Im Fett’.

Notes

Unbestimmt (immediate) ≠ Ungenau (vague)

Longer waves last longer (Bateson)

APPENDIX 6

SEDIMENTS OF AN ORDINARY MIND

Credits, Additional Information and Recording (DVD3)

A work for four dancers that encodes dynamics of learning into its choreographic structure, continuously building upon the dancers' individual thought processes.

CREDITS

Choreography: Michael Klien

Dancer: Nicole Peisl, Mami Shimazaki, Shai Tamir, Davide Terlingo

Music: Volkmar Klien

Stage: Dave Guy, Michael Klien

Duration: 55 min

Produced by Daghdha Dance Company (2004)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: PRINTED PROGRAMME (2006)

APPENDIX 7

LIMERICK TRILOGY

Credits, Additional Information and Recording (DVD4)

A work for three dancers that is comprised of three independent non-linear choreographic processes, which, when combined, manifest themselves in a completely new manner.

CREDITS

Choreography: Michael Klien
Dancer: Nicole Peisl, Angie Smalis, Davide Terlingo
Dramaturgy: Steve Valk
Music: Volkmar Klien
Stage: Dave Guy, Michael Klien
Duration: 55 min
Produced by Daghdha Dance Company (2005)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: PRINTED PROGRAMME (2005)

APPENDIX 8

CHOREOGRAPHY FOR BLACKBOARDS

Credits and Recording (DVD5)

A choreographic work that is not directly concerned with physical movement. Five participants, chosen both locally and internationally, are working on six monolithic blackboards spread throughout a large open space. Actively drawing on the blackboards over a set period of time, they follow exact, rehearsed procedures, developing and exchanging insights and individual expressions in various, immediate communicative forms, weaving their relations into a concentrated collective dance of minds.

CREDITS

Choreography: Michael Klien
Dramaturgy: Steve Valk
Participants: Henry Desreux, Elena Giannotti, Jeffrey Gormly, Bush Hawthorn,
Ciaran O'Driscoll
Music: Volkmar Klien
Stage: Dave Guy, Michael Klien
Duration: 50 min
Produced by Daghdha Dance Company (2006)

APPENDIX 9

SENSE AND MEANING

Credits and Recording (DVD6)

Choreographer Michael Klien and dancer Elena Giannotti have been in conversation for over a year, working on the disclosure of reality through dance in a process entitled 'Field Studies'. In 'Sense and Meaning' they present traces of the mental spaces carved out through that process. Initially a series of strategies, memories, mental-states and procedures, 'Sense and Meaning' binds them together into a comprehensive field for embodied thought.

CREDITS

Choreography:	Michael Klien
Dance and Movement Research:	Elena Giannotti
Dramaturgy:	Steve Valk
Music:	Volkmar Klien
Stage:	Michael Klien
Duration:	50 min
Produced by Daghdha Dance Company (2008)	

APPENDIX 10

ARTICLE: WHAT DO YOU CHOREOGRAPH AT THE END OF THE WORLD?

The article 'What Do You Choreography At The End Of The World?' was commissioned by Zodiak, Centre for New Dance, Helsinki in 2007 for their book *Zodiak: Unden Taussin Taehen*.

Klien, M. and Valk, S. (2007), What Do You Choreograph At The End Of The World?, *Zodiak: Unden Taussin Taehen*, Finland: Like

MICHAEL KLIEN / STEVE VALK

WHAT DO YOU CHOREOGRAPH AT THE END OF THE WORLD ?

3 lectures and more

A DREAM

Last night I took part in a profound and massive demonstration against humanity... against the insanity and intrinsic contradictions in individuals and within society as a whole. I was amongst a throng of tens of thousands of people gathered... each holding a candle in their hands. There was a profound sense of urgency made most noticeable by a deathly silence that arose because no one there had any idea what to do, what to say, or what actions to take.

Finally, for no apparent reason... some people started to raise their candles slightly, soon everyone followed. "Look", I whispered to my girlfriend...

"They are finally doing something!!!"

Michael Klein 12.02.07

A POEM

"These nymphs, I wish to perpetuate them." (1)

Stephane Mallarme: *"Improvisation of a Faun"*

1

DANCE AS A METAPHOR FOR THOUGHT

EMERGENCE BECOMES VISIBLE
WHEN THE OUTLINE OF THE PATTERN
CAN BE SEEN.

Steve Valk: In the 1930's the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson went to the island of Bali and made a film of the "Barong", a 6 hour-long dance / theater ritual in which the whole village participates. (2) This ceremonial "play" is only performed when there is trouble or disharmony, when the dead are seen walking through the village at night etc... The costumes are lavish, the various roles are meticulously rehearsed, the choreographies are precise and are taught at an early age. What is fascinating about this film and this performance is that suddenly, in the middle of it, some of the young dancers start to go into a trance – they fall over, shake violently etc... The trance then seems to spread like wildfire amongst other performers and even a few audience members. Some male dancers who have fallen into trance take their knives and try to stab themselves. Audience members immediately jump on top of them to prevent self-inflicted injury. The film narrator then explains that this state of events is exactly what the Barong is there to bring about. The enactment of the ritual ceremony or "performance" is all a preparation for the moment when it breaks down and falls apart. In this state of emotional and situational conflagration... "the Gods have arrived". In the midst of this mayhem, this outburst of chaos, this orchestrated disaster, the village priest or shaman, sets up his ceremonial apparatus and begins to commune with the gods, to burn offerings, to address the village troubles.

INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES OF THE SELF

Cultures that emphasize firm boundaries and high personal control tend to view the self as exclusionary or "self-contained". Fluid boundary, strong field-control cultures view the self as "ensembled", meaning that the self is inclusive of other individuals. (3)

(reading from E. Martin Walker's essay "Experiences in Social Dreaming")

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

STRANGE CURRENTS OF A SITUATION

On the subject of mind / body relations the anthropologist Gregory Bateson has a profound and revolutionary theory. He describes six formative steps, that I won't go into at this point, that lead to the creation of what he calls "Mind". (4) Mind according to Bateson's understanding, is a certain constellation of a system that is able to retain information. Therefore, a Mind could consist of non-living elements, like a traffic system, or be composed of many organisms, like a school of fish. It may function for brief, as well as extended periods of time and is not necessarily defined by a fixed or firm boundary like skin. If a Mind should have consciousness, then this consciousness is always only partial. Bradford Keeney, a psychologist and admirer of Bateson, has called the mind a 'conversational pattern' and bodies "the participants in the conversation." (5) Each of these kinds of "bodies" also functions as a Mind, in the Batesonian sense, and is engaged in larger conversational patterns with other bodies, which in turn, constitute larger aggregates of Mind.

Steve Valk: So one cannot escape the fact, that at least in systems-theoretical terms, there is no distinction between mind and body. Across all fields, all levels are linked. The formal, highly ritualized Balinese performance reaches a critical state at which a kind of rupture of the symbolic order takes place. At the point when the "the gods arrive" there is a radical almost brutal moment of perceptual re-patterning. Bateson refers to this phenomenon as "kinesthetic socialization" in which the individuals are prepared for altered consciousness, for a "temporary escape from the ego-organized world." (6) The Balinese ritual performance is an enactment of Mind, an example of the organism "village" and its capacity to process and respond to information in a self-corrective way. After the chaos, the whirlwind, a new order, a regenerated psycho-social order has emerged.

"In the science of morphology, physico-chemical processes are detected and analysed. Their ultimate origin and the relationship of all such separate processes are, according to assumption, buried in unfathomable complexity. Thus, organic life is conceived of as a set of centers where the coordination of causal chains is totally lost in complexity. These active centers are what we call organisms. Now this assumption makes for a radical difference from an idea that has always been successful in inorganic science. It is that complex systems can be successfully studied by breaking them down into simples which are easier to analyse. Such a scheme was first described by Descartes in 1637 and is known as the "Cartesian Method". If we accept the concept of an organism as just stated (vague as it still is), we can say that "biology is a non-Cartesian science". Since theoretical parts of all past natural science have been Cartesian in this sense we may conclude that biology is fundamentally and qualitatively different from physical science." (7)

(from **Walter M. Elsasser's** book "Reflections on a Theory of Organisms")

Michael Klien: I have always had a sense that a thought is a physical act and I have always been discontent with people in the dance world who want to get over the Cartesian split by just talking about the body. This is a bizarre notion. You propagate the same idea, just from the other side. You actually widen the gap. How can you only talk about the body when you want to address the whole thing. Conversational patterns are thoughts, they are not just up there. (points to his head) Thought can be everywhere. Thoughts are between us. For things to come into being it is a matter of thought.

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

Michael Klien: Gregory Bateson is one of the founders of this kind of thinking. In the 60's he was part of an LSD experiment. During the testing he was shown a rose and his comment was, "It is amazing how much thought went into this rose for it to become a rose." (8) We are closing in on our theme right now, what we mean by "Dance as a Metaphor for Thought". We are not saying that "thought is dance", but we are talking about a certain figure or "vision of dance", whereby the constellations are loose enough to actually reach a state of excitement or play without falling apart, without losing identity. A system such as a society or a state can be dancing, unlike our present-day situation, where the structures are too tightly constrained by rules and laws for a state to dance. As Robert Musil describes Kakania in his book "The Man Without Qualities" a state can be in flux, where things become possible and great ideas are born where priceless, timeless artefacts are realized, because the conditions are right for the whole system, which in this case is a state, to dance.

Steve Valk: *"Why does dance dawn on Nietzsche as a compulsory metaphor for thought? It is because dance is what opposes itself to Nietzsche's great enemy, an enemy he designates as the "Spirit of Gravity". Dance is, first and foremost, the image of thought subtracted from every spirit of heaviness?"* (9)

(reading from **Alain Badiou's** book "The Handbook of Inaesthetics")

Michael Klien: So the notion of dance has to be applied to all systems rather than applying it exclusively to the physical body. In western societies dance has developed along the lines of what Nietzsche maintains is the opposite of dance, what he calls "obedience and long legs". (10) For Nietzsche, dance is about a lightness which opposes itself to the "Spirit of Gravity" which he associates with the military parade, "obedience and long legs" etc... Strangely enough, when one looks at the development of dance in the 20th century in western society, one sees primarily that, "obedience and long legs". One sees the dancing body subjected to choreography. For some reason a kind of perversion has taken place. People have tried to construct

performative architectures to attain a state of dance, whether it be Martha Graham or 20th century ballet technique. But along the way, the map has been mistaken for the territory, the architecture for the experience. Maybe that's where it has all gone wrong. The structures are not the dance, they are perceptual orientations for getting there. In ballet for instance, the subjective range of movement is very limited, so only the best people can actually attain a state of dance. Most performers are simply executing movement within precisely defined limitations.

Steve Valk: I would like to go back to the story of the Balinese dance / theatre which only achieves its aims when everything falls apart... to look at the certain vision of dance we have been describing...

"Dance is a metaphor for thought precisely inasmuch as it indicates, by means of the body, that a thought, in the form of its eventual surge, is subtracted from every pre-existence of knowledge. How does dance point to this subtraction? Precisely in the manner that the 'true' dancer must never appear to 'know' the dance she dances. Her knowledge (which is technical, immense, and painfully acquired) is traversed, as null, by the pure emergence of her gesture. 'The dancer does not dance' means that what one sees is at no point the realization of a pre-existing knowledge, even though knowledge is, through and through, its matter or support. The dancer is the miraculous forgetting of her own knowledge of dance". (11)

(reading from **Alain Badiou's** book *"The Handbook of Inaesthetics"*)

This notion of a void, of everything falling apart... in Time Magazine I read an article about the Irish rock band U2. Their manager described the torturous creative process the group goes through every time they are at work on a new album. "For them to come up with a great song," the manager said, "God has to walk through the room". This is the point for me, in regards to the notion of "Dance as a Metaphor for Thought", where we reach a kind of event horizon, the place where things fall apart, when "the gods arrive" etc... is the point where there emerges a deeper understanding of the certain vision of dance we have been talking about.

PERSONAL THRESHOLD EXPERIENCE

I remember a performance of "As a Garden In A Setting" in Paris where Jone San Martin was dancing in her first piece for Ballet Frankfurt. That evening, I witnessed one of the best dance performances I have ever seen. It was stupendous, raw and brilliantly danced by everyone. There really was a feeling of all the performers on stage being in a kind of trance. At one point though, I noticed that Jone seemed to slip and fall flat on her back. She got up immediately and continued dancing.

After the show, I went backstage and found her embarrassed and upset about having fallen. She could not explain what happened... just that in the middle of the duet... she had looked at her partner and had been overcome by the feeling that if she were to suddenly throw herself backwards, he would be there to catch her. This of course, could not, and did not happen.

Michael Klien: A STATEMENT

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

Our civilization has been turning dance into a perversion of itself, applying to and onto it, everything that will prohibit its existence in the form of predetermined rigid time, space and action. It might be a symptomatic need to resist mortality's grip. Maybe the reasons are to be found in the dominant muddle of language, which in Bateson's words "stops us from thinking straight" and from dancing in general. (12) To govern dance is in itself a misleading conception, a seemingly vain attempt to fence off its mortal nature, putting shackles on what cannot be tamed without turning it into an empty shell, a sign pointing towards something other than what it is. To choreograph dance conventionally sets movement in stone, whilst trying to recreate, it proves to be an illusion. Dance is Dance and cannot be tampered with, just as Bateson reminds us that "God cannot be mocked." (13) Dance has been crippled by conventional choreography for centuries. It is time to release choreography's hold on dance and let it simply be.

A PARALLEL PROCESS

Steve Valk: When I present dramaturgical research for dance or original theater work, I often create elaborate conceptual environments. Rooms covered from floor to ceiling with photocopies, texts, drawings, there are clotheslines hung with found objects, cut-outs etc..., strung across the room. These dramaturgical spaces are something like “thought-jungles”. In order to engage with this material, with this research, you have to weed and wander through it, to walk, duck, spy, sometimes to hunt. In this mosaic of associations you may find objects of interest, ideas or thoughts, etc..., or they may find you. There is a term in psychology and anthropology called “total field awareness” which accurately describes this sensibility or quality of perception that is evoked in this kind of transitional space between dramaturgical ideas and dance or performance creation.

*“Discard your memory, discard the future tense of your desire;
forget them both. both what you knew and what you want,
to leave space for a new idea” (14)*

(reading from **W. Bion's** book *“Bion in New York and San Paolo”*)

A second important quality or characteristic of these thought-spaces involves the means by which the materials are gathered and selected. The starting point, the guiding sensibility for the research, the gathering of the material and the assemblage of the space, is always a profound sense of “not-knowing”. It is difficult to describe how concrete, how rudimentary this feeling, this quality of blindness, is for my work. It is a presence or sensibility one bears during the creative process, a kind of activated void. It is with conscious awareness of this “strange understanding” that I then, very practically, begin work on a new dance, theater or opera production. Badiou would equate this “not-knowing” with a “subject of poetic truth” or as he has also referred to it, “an anonymous obstinacy that finds its metaphor in sleep”. In a recent interview, William Forsythe, with whom I collaborated for twelve years, referred to the buddhist concept of “no-mind” having an important place in his work. (15) Dramaturgical process which emanates from this undecided state of consciousness produces a terrain of perpetual interaction and creative engagement, a field of thought where perception becomes a dance of meaning creation.

“The sensitivity to dance possessed by each and everyone of us comes from the fact that dance answers, after its own fashion, Spinoza's question: What is a body capable of? It is capable of art, that is, it can be exhibited as native thought. How can we name this emotion that seizes us at this point?... I will name this emotion... an exact vertigo.” (16)

(reading from **Alain Badiou's** book *“The Handbook of Inaesthetics”*)

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

Michael Klien: Maybe it is because dance is always pointing towards the possibility of change... towards the unknown, “silently rewriting your vision”, as Badiou says. (17) It never lets you get comfortable.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE THAT SURROUNDS THE HYPOTHETICAL, UNFATHOMABLE CENTER OF LIVING ORGANISMS

Michael Klien: There is an illusive and mysterious way in which dance seems to embody a secret recipe for the creation and maintenance of living systems such as a Balinese village or an arts organization in Limerick. I can feel the presence of the dancing that happens at Daghdha like an invisible fabric that touches and envelopes everything we do, everything that happens. Nietzsche said that dance could be “a new name given to the earth”. (18) For the French philosopher, Alain Badiou it is the embodiment of the principle of “an exact vertigo”. This state between finite and infinite, place and non-place, integration and disintegration seems to be an elemental and subsequently healthy i.e. “regenerative” mode of being in the world.

Steve Valk: At Daghdha Dance Company we have tried to cultivate something like a new ecology of the arts: to see a cultural institution, like a dance company, as the initiator of a living process which begins within the company itself, its internal workings etc... and then extends into relationship with its own immediate and not so immediate surroundings. The “vision of dance” we have been referring to in this discussion and the role that “dancing” and “the dance” play at Daghdha is one of a constituting principle. Dance within the ecology of Daghdha is an active power which instills an undercurrent of intimate awareness and interconnectivity, a kind of environmental intelligence, a vision of the health of the whole system that informs and challenges both the company’s everyday affairs and its engagement with its emerging future.

2

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE

“One of the interesting things that happens is that if you look at your hand and consider it not as a number of bananas on the end of a sort of flexible stick, but if you consider it as “a nest of relations” out there... you will find that the object looks much prettier than you thought it looked. Part of the discovery of the beauty of a biological form is the discovery that it is put together of relations and not put together of parts. This means that with a correction of our epistemology, you might find the world was a great deal more beautiful than you thought it was. Or you might let in the fact of its being beauty in a way that you were able to keep it out by thinking that the world was made of parts and wholes.” (19)

(recorded lecture **Gregory Bateson**: “On Epistemology”)

Michael Klien: STATEMENT

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

As an aesthetics... a sensitive knowing... the discipline of choreography can be applied to inquire into the dance of life, effortlessly merging observation, theoretical writing and philosophy with practical rigor and personal expression to create works of art. The stage becomes a laboratory, the laboratory a stage for the governing and steering of existing mind-dynamics and processes whether physically expressed such as a human body or a flower... or not... such as evolution or learning. Applying the aesthetics of choreography as a purposeful, creative and pro-active tool upon the surface of reality, embodies a healthy disregard for established boundaries which have arisen in fields of human knowledge production such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, education, religion, biology and history. “Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change” engages everyone’s perception and knowledge of “how things move”,

inquiring if and how individuals can imaginatively order and re-order aspects of their personal, social, cultural and political lives. It examines the role of choreographer as one of ... an active agent of change... within an ever-changing environment.

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

Michael Klien: When we first moved into our new premises, St. John's Church, we decided to stop what we were doing and really look deeply and rigorously at our practice. We initiated a public thinktank called Framemakers, examining choreography and dance outside of their traditional cultural framework exposing these disciplines to fields of wider concern. We started talking to theologians, politicians, scientists, cyberneticists, psychologists etc..., to discuss choreography as an “*Aesthetics of Change*”. Who choreographs what in society? Who... if anyone... is constructing the frames and who is living by them. Working under the simple and straightforward assumption that the stage is part of life as such, and that the strategies developed there have a wider relevance, including the ordering of the social sphere, the Framemakers Project began asking questions of how things are ordered and which frames are created for movement to take place. The term choreography was transposed to the field of human relations, as a way of seeing the world, the art of interacting and interfering with the everyday governance of relations and dynamics, expressed in physical movement or ideas.

SYSTEMIC ADJUSTMENT

For me, there is simply no other or better word or concept than “choreography” to describe an active inquiry into the non-concrete reality that deals with complex relations and connections within the natural world. Many fields of human inquiry deal with elements in a specialized reductionist manner, there is really no field apart from maybe religion that enables us to deal with experiences and phenomena that are so “unfathomably complex”, so far beyond our ability to comprehend that we require forms of symbolic expression. These are things we are only able to apprehend aesthetically, kinesthetically, intuitively.

Steve Valk: The theoretical biologist Walter Elsasser in his book on the theory of organisms talks about the concept of “unfathomable complexity” in nature which says that the behavior of living organisms cannot be reduced to physico-chemical causality.⁽²⁰⁾ He comes from quantum physics and has even proposed the notion of creativity as a scientifically admissible concept. Creativity is a term he sees as a “going over point” between the “unfathomable” quantum-theoretical and the more widely practiced mechanistic-biological thinking.

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

ORGANISM AND ENVIRONMENT

The whole of our thinking about what we are and what other people are has got to be restructured. This is not funny, and I do not know how long we have to do it in. If we continue to operate on the premises that were fashionable during the Pre-Cybernetic era, and which were especially underlined during the Industrial Revolution, which seemed to validate the Darwinian unit of survival, we may have twenty or thirty years before the logical reductio ad absurdum of our old positions destroys us. Nobody knows how long we have, under the present system, before some disaster strikes us, more serious than the destruction of any group of nations. The most important task today is, perhaps, to learn to think in a new way.” (21)

(quote from **Gregory Bateson** in the book “About Bateson”)

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

Michael Klien: It must have something to do with closed self-referential loops that are at work when art is validating its own existence. Such loops, when fed by their own history and concepts, create safety zones in which people can stay to avoid confronting the outside. Addressing the issues that humanity is facing within an arts context, separated from a social or political one, is a practical castration of potential and possibility. When Derrida speaks about the political act being “the settings of artificial relations between people”, how can the choreographer, who does exactly that for a living, retreat into a studio and practice his or her “politics” in front of a mirror. (laughs) It doesn’t make sense. I feel that there is a real lack of critical evaluation of the role of art outside its own historical context. This then leads to a closing of the information loop and the maintaining of status quos, of conceptual “safety zones”; theaters, orchestras, dance companies, festivals, exhibitions etc...

The director of one of Germany's most important museums told me recently, in total seriousness, that statistically only 12% of the population participate in the arts. He accepted that as a given fact, and allocated his marketing funds, designed his publicity and advertising strategies in accordance with that "reality".

*"The Figi Islanders say, "We don't have art.
We just try to do everything as well as possible." (22)*

(reading from Marshall McLuhan's book "The Global Village")

Steve Valk: The image of the Balinese ceremony comes to mind. This sense of full immersion, involvement, participation etc..., of everyone present. Half the performers breaking out in trance, some people out-of-control, trying to hurt themselves etc..., audience members diving on top of them, others standing and watching. Amidst all of this... the priests setting up their ritual space. In our present-day culture this kind of spontaneous, ungoverned behavior only happens during real catastrophes, floods, earthquakes, storms.

Michael Klien: Art and culture are not a factor today in the creation and transformation of society, its laws, etc... despite the critical situations most western societies are facing. That is a sobering reality. There is a schism, a disconnect that prevents co-habitation, information-transfer, sense-making, engagement, participation, immersion in the totality of the social realm. Art and Culture seem unable to respond affirmatively, courageously, to the demands, the complexities, to the richness... of the contemporary situation.

Steve Valk: Out of a growing awareness of the ever-widening gap between "the way man thinks and the way nature works," choreography, traditionally understood as "the art of movement in time and space", has found itself being drawn away from "the ideal world" of the stage. (23) At the same time it has been driven to undergo a re-examination of its conceptual language and explanatory systems. Choreography has moved beyond the architecture of its stationary historical universe and has emerged as an embodied act of a human consciousness no longer separate from, but embedded within, the irreducible, unfathomably complex ordering system of the biological world.

3

SOCIAL DREAMING / SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

Steve Valk: STATEMENT

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

“For the human psyche is one of the great forces of nature, and what is most frightening about this space-time technology is that it exposes us to this force within us as nothing else has. We are standing in the storm of our own being. We are standing in a world not created by God, except indirectly, but by our psyches. It is undeniably our fate, so we must face the fact... that it may be... our natural habitat.” (24)

(reading from J. Hillman and M. Ventura's book “We've Had A Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World is Getting Worse”)

STEPS TO AN ECOLOGY OF MIND

Choreography has been adapted and introduced into the fabric of social reality as a kind of perceptual framing device, a self-actuating template for an ecologically reconfigured experiment in contemporary subjectivity. The cognitive scientist Francisco Varela has said, “The blind spot of contemporary science is experience.”⁽²⁵⁾ “Social Choreography has opened an arena of cultural interplay between artists and audience, a lived and interconnected world of relationships, patterns and dynamics, a region of new and subtle observational capacities in which a deeper level of interdependence, an implicate order of mind and nature, has emerged as a model for a new and regenerative social reality.

The dancer (the fragile self) points us in the direction of what the will is capable of learning.” (26)

(reading from Alain Badiou's book “The Handbook of inaeesthetics”)

THE SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHIC ACT

Negri always speaks of the great creativity of the multitudes (multitude is the new name for the masses, let us admit to this), but where have we seen this creativity? It is not because you're protesting at Genoa that there is a creativity of the multitude. I have seen hundreds of these types of protests over the years and can honestly say that there isn't an ounce of creativity in all of this. Hence, the problem of creativity at this stage is a problem of knowing what creates political heterogeneity. But to create a political heterogeneity supposes very complicated and very novel principles of rupture. I am not saying that all this is easy, on the contrary. But at least we have this idea: we have this experimental idea of seeing how, on a certain number of issues, in a certain number of spaces, we can finally create political heterogeneity. (27)

(reading from an interview with **Alain Badiou** "After the Event: Rationality and the Politics of Invention")

Michael Klien: Is Social Choreography, "playing for real" with the social structures, applying aesthetic sensibilities and subjective realities to the organization of society etc... coupled to a sense of "utopian impulse" or might it simply be aimed at deconstructing existing boundaries and existing ways of doing things?

Steve Valk: I like the words "culture" and "cultivation". To cultivate, one could say – is to disturb or rupture the soil – but this is not a purely destructive act. Cultivation means bringing air into the soil, turning things over, for new surfaces to emerge, for water to penetrate. The choreographic act is one of cultivation – as the shifting and changing and digging over of a situation in the social realm which allows for a new awareness to enter into a specific situation. It is participatory, creating conditions for things to happen...

Michael Klien: Of course this development and these concepts are not entirely new.

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

"I think the real difficulty is that some readers just do not believe that I mean what I say. I suspect that they think it is all a sort of entertainment and hope to come out at the end feeling refreshed." (28)

(quote from **Gregory Bateson** in the book "About Bateson")

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

"If faced with the extreme situation affecting us all, and stimulated by the sick condition of the social organism, people together can follow through with the impulse to change things, it will be possible to develop an intuition of a healthy image of this social organism. And as their hearts warm to this social form that still needs to be created, the will of each individual becomes a part of a common and greater will, which may then possess the strength to create something new on the one hand, and on the other, to develop ever new insights into how this path towards a new reality might be travelled?" (29)

(reading from an interview with **Joseph Beuys** "What is Art?")



NEW MEANINGFUL PUBLIC SPACE A MANIFESTO:

"We are all in the bowels of this giant machine, the modern global economy, being used as instruments to serve its ends. We have created this machine collectively, but we feel trapped individually. We've shifted the burden so much to the machine that we don't see a lot of options even though they may be really there. We can't go into the woods and live happily off the land anymore. So we "deep freeze" our ability to sense what is actually going on. We deny the larger consequences of what we are doing." (30)

(reading from **P. Senge, O. Scharmer, B. Flowers, J. Jaworski's** book "Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society")

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

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

PERFORMING CULTURE WITH THE MIND OF WISDOM

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

THE TIME TO HOUSE OURSELVES... IS NOW!!!

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

A GROWING SENSE OF URGENCY

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

A NEW SOURCE OF INTENTION

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

F

FINAL THOUGHT: THE NEXT EVOLUTIONARY STEP WILL BE CULTURAL NOT TECHNOLOGICAL

„The schizophrenic split between supersensible conditions and physical conditions is something we have overcome and we can now head towards a new cultural epoch; or you can say: we have a new “cultural epoch.” (31)

(reading from an interview with **Joseph Beuys** “*What is Art?*”)

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

Steve Valk: “*We are standing in the storm of our own being,*” as James Hillman says. If the development of these ideas gets stuck somewhere, it will not get stuck in one place but in many different places. Here I have to recall your dream Michael, about “*taking part in a profound and massive demonstration against humanity.*” If choreographers like Michael Klien and William Forsythe get stuck, then Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer, Betty Sue Flowers and Joe Jaworski, the enlightened business consultants at MIT, will also be stuck. Our good friends Gordon Lawrence and Bipin Patel doing Social Dreaming in London will get stuck. Al Gore and the deep ecologists, Jesper Hoffmeyer and the holistic biologists will get stuck. Cybernetic Epistemology and the Quantum Physics will be stuck.

"The Cartesian split between mind and matter is no longer sustainable. The bringing forth of a world is made possible through the quality of our mental disposition for being available to connectedness that is made manifest in the matrix and, more generally, in the mental web of life that connects all humanity that is being postulated." (32)

(reading from **Gorden Lawrence's** book *"Experiences in Social Dreaming"*)

So, not just artists and choreographers would be caught in the no man's land of abstract ideas, there would be a living matrix of people around the world and across many disciplines, unable to act. There is a convergent new reality being postulated on many different levels. If things gets stuck... as they might... it will be a shared stuckness.

ON STUCKNESS

*"The old idea of a cell being like a sack full of proteins and all sorts of other good things has been supplanted by the contemporary view of the cell as having a complex inner structure that bears more resemblance to **the structure of a city** than to the structure of a sack of flour. But the point at which the true focus of this account starts to become clear is when we discover that it is precisely this freezing of the cell's chemical make-up which institutes a totally new kind of freedom, one which I call...**semiotic freedom**. Because even the single-celled organism knew a little trick which proved most effective in...tempering the growth of predictability. It was able to describe itself - or at least key aspects of itself - in an abstract code embedded in the string DNA molecule bases. Fragments of this coded self-description could then be copied, sometimes wrongly, and traded with other members of the same species - or even on occasion, with members of another species. The never - ending sequence of "mistakes" and "misunderstandings" that put life-forms on earth into a constant state of flux, the sequence which we call... organic evolution, was set in motion. (33)*

(reading from **Jesper Hoffmeyer's** book *"Signs of Meaning in the Universe"*)

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APPENDIX 11

ARTICLE: CHOREOGRAPHY: THE PATTERN LANGUAGE

The article 'Choreography: The Pattern Language' was published by *Kybernetes*, a leading journal in the field of systemic science, as part of their memorial issue on Gregory Bateson in 2007.

Klien, M., (2007), *Choreography: A Pattern Language*, *Kybernetes*, Volume 36, Number 7/8, UK: Emerald Publishers



Choreography: a pattern language

Choreography: a
pattern language

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Abstract

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Purpose – This paper aims to outline recent developments in the field of choreography, especially focusing on the influence of Gregory Bateson's ideas. Choreography is progressing towards a form of art that not only deals with the creation and manipulation of systems of rules, but does so in a non-deterministic, open way. The author argues that if the world is approached as a reality constructed of interactions, relationships, constellations and proportionalities and choreography is seen as the aesthetic, creative practice of setting those relations – or setting the conditions for those relations – to emerge.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on ten years practical research and artistic creations, the author introduces choreography as the creative act of ordering, outlining the shift and developments in this field by introducing ideas of system theory and cybernetics, especially as described by Gregory Bateson.

Findings – Choreography has become a metaphor for dynamic constellations of any kind, consciously choreographed or not, self-organising or artificially constructed. It has become a metaphor for order, embodied by self-organising systems as observed in the biological world or superimposed by a human creator. The choreographer deals with patterns and frameworks within the context of an existing, larger, ongoing choreography of physical, mental, and social structures. As an aesthetics of change, the discipline of choreography can be applied to enquire into the dance of life, merging observation, theoretical writing and philosophy with practical rigor and personal expression.

Practical implications – Choreographic knowledge gained in the field of dance or harvested from perceived patterns in nature should be transferable to other realms of human knowledge production, providing a new aesthetic sensibility in the act of creation.

Originality/value – This essay delineates choreography as a new aesthetics, the one of change.

Keywords Cybernetics, Arts, Psychology, Brain

Paper type Conceptual paper

Choreograph (v.): bodies in time and space

Choreograph (v.): act of arranging relations between bodies in time and space

Choreography (v.): act of framing relations between bodies ... "a way of seeing the world"

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

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

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

Choreograph (v.): act of witnessing such an order

Choreography (v.): act of interfering with or negotiating such an order (Text: Jeffrey Gormly/Michael Klien).



Introduction

Introducing systems theory and cybernetic knowledge to the creative act of ordering, the process as well as the resulting work are transformed, shifting the notion of choreography towards a form of art that not only deals with the creation and manipulation of systems of rules, but does so in a non-deterministic, open way.

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Choreography, as the arrangement of movement in time and space, is opening a discourse on order and movement. What is order? How is it achieved? What is movement? The (human) body as such is not necessarily the focus of such choreographic inquiry. System theory, cybernetics, information theory, energy flow and mind dynamics, such as outlined by Gregory Bateson, become relevant and indispensable fields for choreographic theory and practice. The term's open denotation has also led choreography to be considered as a metaphor for dynamic constellations of any kind, consciously created or not, self-organising or superimposed. It can become a metaphor for order observed in biological systems, for exchange of forces in the world of physics and the interaction of elements in the world of chemistry; a metaphor for a process with an observable or observed embodied order, no longer exclusively in need of a human creator, existing only for us to witness and/or interfere with. Choreography is emerging as a way of seeing the world; a world full of interaction, relationships, constellations, dependencies, arrangements and proportionalities.

At this order (. . .), conversations, human sexuality, family dinners, and international conflict are organized according to the rules of choreography that govern (i.e., pattern) their interactional themes (Keeney, 1983).

Choreographic practice

My work, as an artist, has focused on a paradigm shift in thinking about choreography by redefining it as an emerging aesthetics concerned with the workings and governance of patterns, dynamics and ecologies. Choreography has been proposed as a “pattern language” an emerging, autonomous aesthetic discipline, the findings of which can be applied to other spheres of human endeavours, such as the social realm. For the past ten years, fellow artists[1] and myself have been working towards the formulation of this “aesthetics of change”. During this period, we have considerably redeveloped the conventional concepts of choreography, opening up the discipline to other fields of human knowledge. Integral to this development have been the writings of Gregory Bateson, or more over, his way of seeing the world. Bateson's ideas, coupled with developments in contemporary art, present a fundamental shift in thinking about choreography: away from the act of structuring and arranging information in time and space, superimposing order onto a seemingly inactive and passive world, towards a recognition of interconnectedness: the creative act of setting the conditions for things to happen, the choreographer as the navigator, negotiator and architect of a fluid environment that he/she himself/herself is part of. I suggest that Bateson's descriptions, insights and readings of nature form the basis for choreography to emerge as an aesthetics of change. It is difficult to trace or pinpoint Bateson's influence on this process, but his ideas have constantly been inspiring and challenging, providing long-lost bridges between the worlds of numbers, straight lines, cause-and-effect and the worlds of poetry, dreams, quantities and recursivity, thereby manifesting a more substantive and richer world of patterns. Reading Bateson harnesses a new way of thinking, and although the processes of research and development in our field will not always relate to Bateson's ideas directly, the underlying patterns of thought are very similar. Once absorbed his timeless and thorough interpretation of nature effortlessly destabilises established frameworks running throughout human civilisation. His observations expose exploitative

world-views, ignorance and compartmentalised linear thinking – much of which human creation is based upon. Once understanding Bateson, one can no longer speak of discreet realities, as reality is woven through and in between different speech and in between different modalities of presentation. Bateson's forms of double-description make apparent a reality that cannot be spoken about directly. His work lays bare a world of unfathomable complexity, a reality of relations not to be captured in the logic of language.

Traditional approaches to choreography are based on the idea of dance being “the use of energy in space and time” (Ellfeldt, 1974), suggesting that choreography is the arrangement of this energy in space and time. My work as a choreographer started out by subscribing to dominant ordering procedures, whereby A is followed by B, B by C, etc. Each work has a distinct beginning, middle and end, and all movement is (relatively) fixed within space and time. The way our society has choreographed dance has always been reflective of the larger phenomena of how we, as a society, deal with the unknown, the *unframeable*, the spiritual and the animal. Conventional choreography imposes rigid frames upon dance. It is the embodiment of cultural suppression of that what is not to be governed by subjective and collective will.

In the late 1990s, I became dissatisfied with the fixed nature of my work and I followed various leads, including Bateson's, to establish choreographic procedures of active ordering and steering that would be closer to the way nature works. “Duplex” – a *pas des deux* for Ballett Frankfurt[2] was created for dancers to play out a duet every time anew. A *pas de Deux*, that with the help of a computer software allowed to maintain its movement-proportionalities in terms of its compositional structure. I aimed to loosen up rigid compositional structures (such like a *Pas de Deux*), whilst maintaining a specific, overall Gestalt or form. The central question that arose was how to keep this overall Gestalt whilst keeping the substance, or the narrative of the piece – even in its abstract nature – quite fluid. “Duplex” tried to preserve immediacy and the moment of creation while at the same time providing a structural skeleton of relations for the whole piece not to fall apart. The dancers took instructions from screens around the stage that constantly provided them with information to be translated into movement. The script was running past them like a music score. It took about a year to get comfortable with this procedure but at the point of the premiere the reading-off and integration into performance was rather effortless. The complex and problematic elements were the lifts and physical contacts between the dancers because it required them to read it off and interpret the information the same way, otherwise it would cause confusion or create a certain conflict. It soon became apparent that these moments were actually the very interesting elements of *Duplex*. In this work, the dancers had to continuously *be* in the moment, forming strategies in regards to the other and in regards to exact timing and spacing; all of which required an active, present mind. Over and over situations arose that caused conflicts. These circumstances helped to developed little stories within the piece that were not preconceived and very much emerged in the moment. The work became most interesting when the dancers adapted the movement material to their own needs. “Duplex” allowed very personal elements to arise; the performers were not just “dancers” in a conventional sense but “real people” living their lives on stage, and because of the compositional methods applied, these elements became very vivid. Since, then, I am much more focused on collaborating with dancers as artists rather

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than working with “bodies”. Conventional approaches to choreography often utilise dancers to create pattern that are not directly relevant to the individual (the dancer) forming the pattern. As I am aiming to work with the whole person, all the movement material within a work is generated out of his/her own processes such as his/her memory and his/her ability to learn and to forget. The final choreographies cannot be rehearsed because all processes of learning and creation are encoded within the choreographic (compositional) structure of the piece. Therefore, the piece, once it is set, can only be run once or twice a day, till it reaches a critical state through the various processes of individual learning and integration. At some stage, an overall compositional *Gestalt* arises that is stable enough to be performed as a *piece* in front of people. The challenge in such work is to work with the individuals as an artist, to bring their memories, experiences, physical knowledge, moods, etc into the creative process, giving space for such processes to be recalled and developed within the work. The choreographic framing has to happen for the whole individual – including their thoughts and memories. This leads to issues of “steering” and group-dynamics as the act of choreography takes political dimensions. The dancers are no longer “employed to perform” but they are taking part in “living on stage” negotiating their personal freedom and subjective reality within a larger group. The choreographer is no longer concerned with the creation of particular patterns or instances, but is providing conditions for things to happen. To remove the stage from this equation is really a small step from this particular approach, and choreography can be utilised as the creative act of composing fluid architectures of mental frames for living. The term “social choreography” has been emerging out of this work to replace the concept of “social engineering” moving the notion of steering and ordering a larger system away from mechanical thinking into the realm of creativity and aesthetics.

Perception and the subversive act of ordering

Creation and perception are tightly entangled. Coomaraswamy (1934) wrote that “art is to imitate nature in its manner of operation” suggesting that the artist utilises processes deductible from a reality as perceived by the subject to formulate structural methodologies, rather than simply imitating nature’s appearance. Compositional/creational tools are “learned” dynamics and processes, with some tools – such as repetition – having their basis in an observed biological world. The simple structural tool of “repetition” as commonly used by composers and choreographers, is deeply embodied in the repetitive cycles of day and night, ebb and flow and the calendar’s seasons. It is from our environment that we deduct our structural processes to employ them for our own means, whether to write music, choreograph dances or build nations. I am inclined to extend this statement to all forms of artificial human creation, hence from the construction of artefacts to the creations of tools, companies, contracts and conditions for the creators and their families to live-in. All perceived patterns that have been assimilated into our knowledge are recursively connected to all the patterns we have at our disposal for any conscious act of creation. It often seems that we are limited foremost not by imagination, but by perception and the lack of ability to integrate the perceived into our thought processes. Personally, I believe that the way we organise our pots and pans has a direct implication on the way we organise our children and our relationships in general. However, it is hardly

the pots that determine the order of our world directly, but a deeper, imprinted unconscious order, which governs humanity, society and the individual.

A crude reading of nature (hierarchical, compartmentalised-thinking, etc.) leads to a limited repertoire of patterns from which to create conditions for living, as people are set in, and by one another, in certain relations. The resulting creations, the artificial organisational constructs, are recursively validating each other, creating subtle balances – the very assumptions on which our collective reality is built upon. As long as in one’s perception of reality cause and effect is tightly linked and easily separable from its context, the only viable option for building physical and mental structures is to follow a linear path, whereby a substance of some sort is fixed within a compositional structure of beginning, middle and end. The resulting assumptions in turn form gaps and holes in the rhizome of relations, a kind of negative space that forms a mould for other structures to fill, thereby creating attractors or force fields in the fabric of relations. These, once over, cause ideas to develop into certain structural/relational patterns or shapes which recursively form the fluid matrix of life. Artificial constructs and creations are intertwined with organisational dynamics not part of conscious creation but bound into much wider processes of self-organisation, emergence, learning and evolution. To what degree human creation is no more than a myth subject to much larger forces at play remains unanswered. However, a notion of change subject to human consciousness clearly remains in one’s experience. To change the way things are done – the way things are – one must thrust a deeply subversive act into the existing language of patterning, introducing a new structural vocabulary to the fabric of relations. By utilising new compositional and organisational procedures, some of which might remain non-verbalised, the very assumption of reality is questioned in the larger system of artificial creation as the “idea-moulds” of *how things are* will change – and once more, a slightly re-configured reality might emerge through a recursive process carried through the larger system. Just like a virus can affect the whole system through the system’s ability to adjust to a newly found internal challenge, so new ways of patterning can and will generate major change in the overall system. However, newly discovered patterning procedures can only be found within the larger framework of which one is a part. This awareness should evoke a renaissance in the examination of the fundamental forces at work in nature, harnessing these forces by abstraction, adjusting and refining them, thereby introducing new elements, as well as changing the collective repertoire of ordering, structuring and hence creation.

Bateson’s manner

As outlined above, “(. . .) to imitate nature in its manner of operation” (Coomaraswamy, 1934), one has to cultivate a sensibility for exactly what this *manner* is. Gregory Bateson was able to harness a deeply developed sensibility for the interconnectedness and interdependence of living systems thereby enabling new ways of structuring, ordering and creating to emerge:

One of the interesting things that happens if you look at your hand and consider it not as a number of bananas at the end of a sort of a flexible stick but as a nest of relations out there (. . .) you will find that the object looks much prettier than you thought it looked. A part of the discovery of the beauty of the biological form is the discovery that in fact it is it put together of relations and not put together of parts. This means with a correction of our epistemology you might find the world was a great deal more beautiful than you thought that it was.

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Or might let in that fact of its being beauty, in a way that you were able of keeping it out by thinking that the world was made up of parts and wholes. [...] Relations between relations and relations between relations' relations (sic.) (Bateson, 1979).

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To live harmoniously within an ecological system, one must strive to perceive the deep structural processes from one's environment, harvest them, integrate and digest them, to make them part of one's mental processes and furthermore to apply them as structural tools in one's personal creations. Bateson's notion of "mind" provides a foundation for the perception of a world rich in patterns, of a choreographic fabric of life, of a world, which thinks and dances. Rather than looking at mind and matter as discreet substances, Bateson discusses "mind" according to a particular organisational process: the arrangement of matter. Patterns of organisation and relational symmetry evident in all living systems are indicative of this particular understanding of "mind". In Bateson's view, all of the following criteria have to be satisfied before a system can display phenomena like thought, evolution, life and learning; phenomena which are part of open or living systems:

- (1) A mind is an aggregate of interacting parts or components.
- (2) The interaction between parts of mind is triggered by difference, and difference is a non-substantial phenomenon not located in space or time; difference is related to negentropy and entropy rather than to energy.
- (3) Mental process requires collateral energy.
- (4) Mental process requires circular (or more complex) chains of determination.
- (5) In mental process, the effects of difference are to be regarded as transforms (i.e. coded versions) of events which preceded them. The rules of such transformation must be comparatively stable (i.e. more stable than the content) but are themselves subject to transformation.
- (6) The description and classification of the processes of transformation disclose a hierarchy of logical types immanent in the phenomena (Bateson, 2002).

These six points provide the foundation upon which an entirely new aesthetics can be built. They form a simple, but precise description, of how life holds together, forms bodies, ideas, even social systems. Bateson's thought manifests an awareness of a new reality, whereby a choreographer's act of creation can no longer blindly accept the boundaries of tradition and habit, but must instead, pursue patterns of thought in which relations form a mind. He or she must show a healthy disregard for distinctions generated by conventional modes of human thought and be prepared to re-organise reality around the manner in which nature works, in the form of "ecologies of mind". Bateson's world, once assimilated, shakes existing boundaries, distinctions, hierarchies, habits and ordering principles to the core. If we as human beings could manage to somehow integrate such sensitive knowledge into our work and life, new, more suitable patterns of living and consuming would emerge. Being closer to the way nature works, these new patterns would create less potential for conflict with the environment and most likely extend "the wave" called humanity.

Summary

Choreography has become a metaphor for dynamic constellations of any kind, consciously choreographed or not, self-organising or artificially constructed. It has become a metaphor for order, intrinsically embodied by self-organising systems as observed in the biological world or superimposed by a human creator. If the world is approached as a reality constructed of interactions, relationships, constellations and proportionalities and choreography is seen as the aesthetic practice of setting those relations – or setting the conditions for those relations to emerge – choreographic knowledge gained in the field of dance or harvested from perceived patterns in nature should be transferable to other realms of life. The choreographer, at the centre of his art, deals with patterns and frameworks within the context of an existing, larger, ongoing choreography of physical, mental, and social structures. As an aesthetics – a sensitive knowing – of change, the discipline of choreography can be applied to enquire into the dance of life, effortlessly merging observation, theoretical writing and philosophy with practical rigor and personal expression to create works of art. The stage becomes a laboratory, the laboratory a stage for the governing and steering of existing mind-dynamics and processes, whether physically expressed (such as the body or a flower) or not (such as evolution or learning). Applying the aesthetics of choreography as a purposeful, creative and proactive tool upon the surface of consciousness, proves a healthy disregard to virtual boundaries of human knowledge production which have arisen through habit or otherwise, transgressing through realms known as sociology, philosophy, psychology, religion, biology and history. This approach engages everyone's perception and knowledge of "how things move" inquiring if and how individuals can imaginatively order and re-order aspects of their personal, social, cultural and political life. It examines the role of the choreographer as possible agent of change within an ever-changing environment.

Afterthought

Last year, as I sat and prepared for a symposium on Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change, I tried to formulate a worldview that I had been thinking about. How everything is connected and organised according to certain patterns, patterns that constitute a mind . . . just as Bateson had described it. It became clear that to find sanity in this universal mind we first and foremost need to find an ecology within. Once we have developed a sensibility for all of that, we ought to find steps to such an ecology of mind – I was convinced, I had finally figured it all out whilst my eyes drifted to my left, focusing in on one of Bateson's books (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind*), recognising that I finally (might have) understood the title.

Notes

1. The core of this research has been taking place at Daghdha Dance Company (Limerick, from 2003 onwards), Ballett Frankfurt and Barriedale Operahouse (London, 1994-2000). Artists involved in the formulation of choreography as an aesthetics of change include Jeffrey Gormly, Michael Klien, Nicholas Mortimore, Davide Terlingo and Steve Valk amongst others.
2. "Duplex" has been produced by Ballett Frankfurt in 2001. Concept/Choreography: Michael Klien Music: Volkmar Klien; Programming: Nick Rothwell

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APPENDIX 12

FRAMEMAKERS 2005: PROGRAMME-BOOK

‘Framemakers 2005’ was a symposium exploring a world understood in terms of relations, order and ecologies. Over a four-week period ‘Framemakers’ brought together interdisciplinary strands of choreographic experimentation and presentation. The aim of Framemakers was to re-politicise the creative process and reflect on choreographic systems fundamental to all aspects of our personal, social, cultural and political lives.

Date: 13th May – 12th June 2005, Limerick/ September 2005 Dublin, Ireland

Location: Daghda Space, St. John’s Church, Limerick, Ireland

Project-leaders: Michael Klien, Steve Valk and Jeffrey Gormly

Produced by Daghda Dance Company in association with The Project Arts Centre (Dublin) and in partnership with leading Irish institutions such as The Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies (University of Limerick).

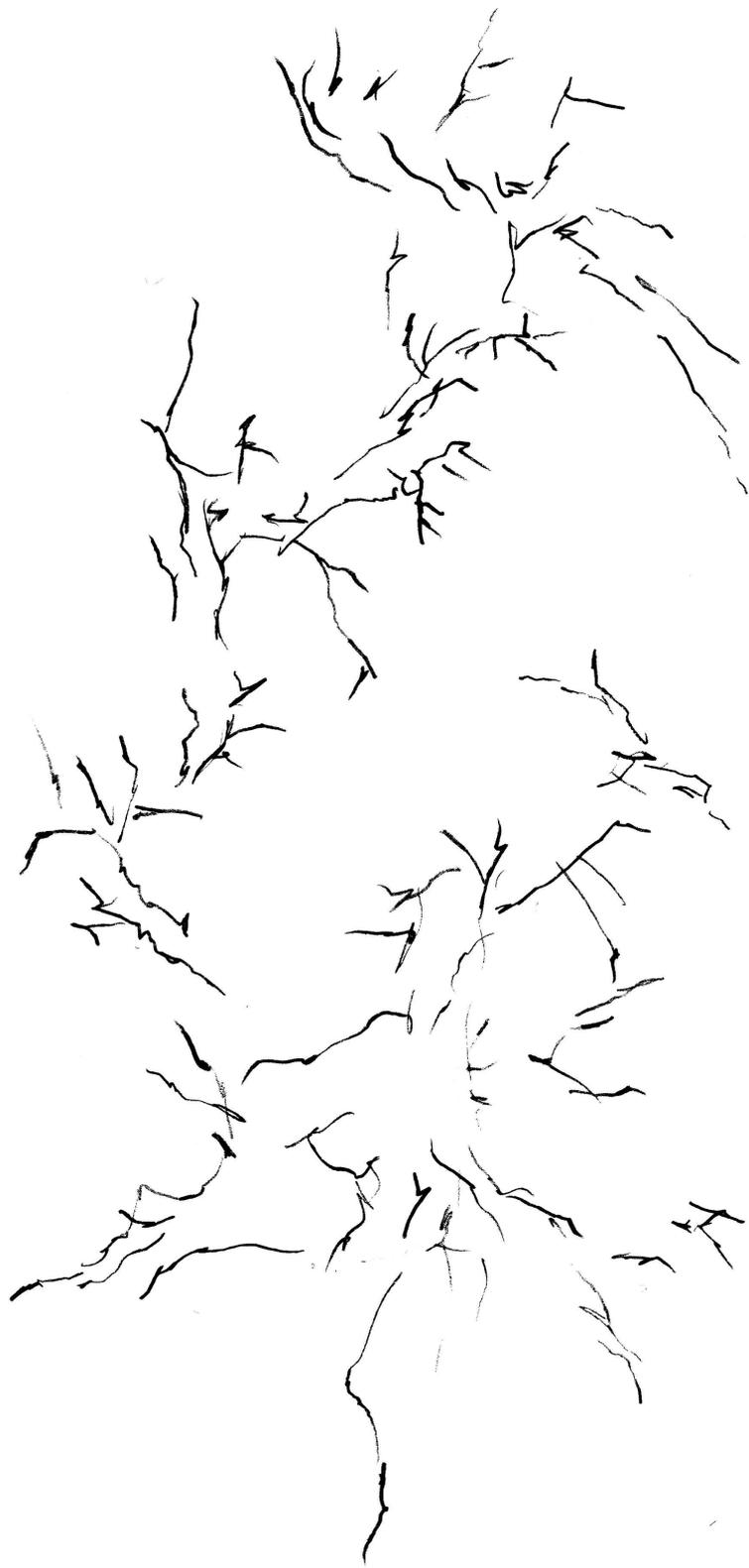
APPENDIX 13

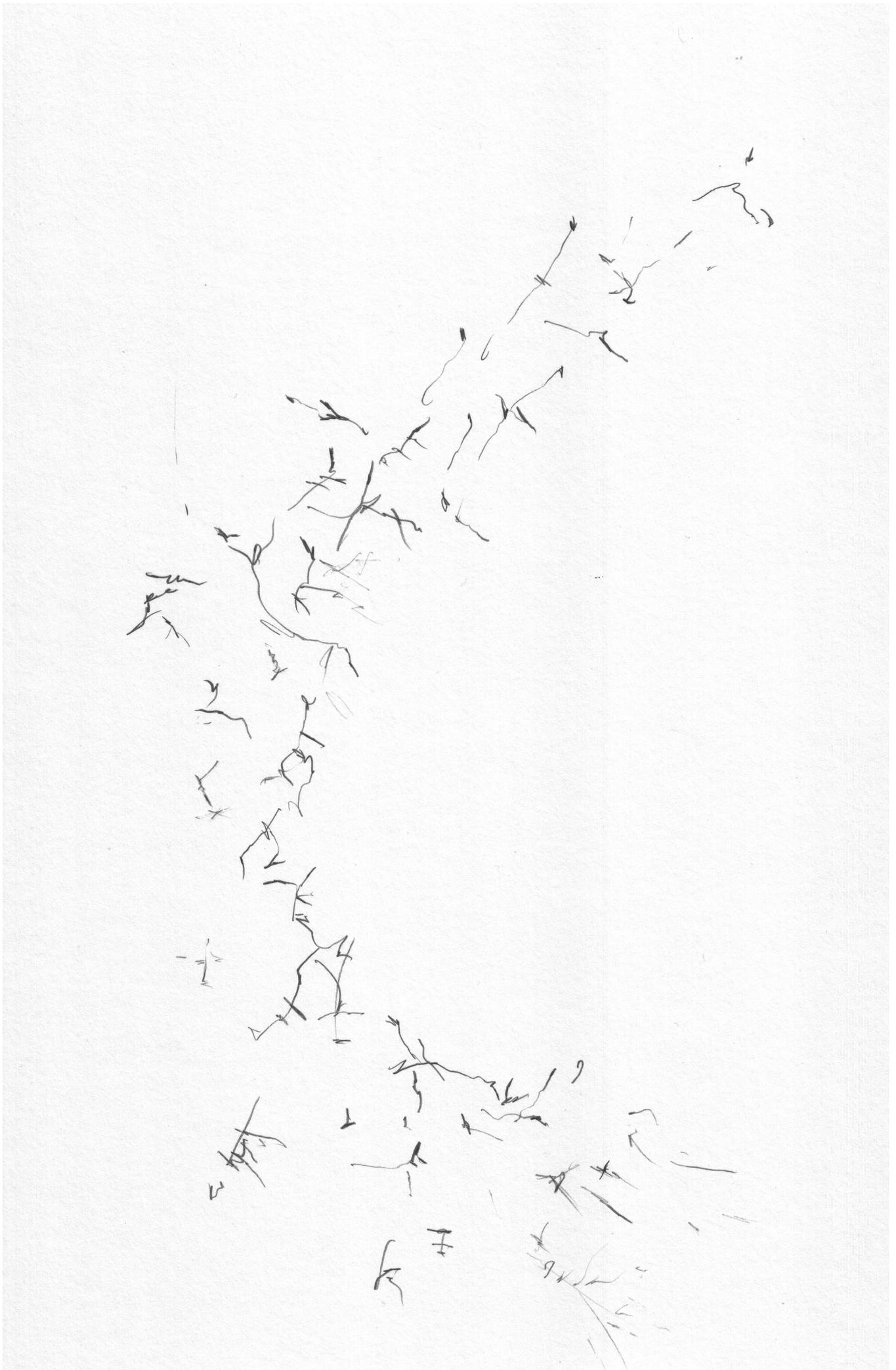
EXAMPLES OF CHOREOGRAPHIC DRAWINGS (KLIEN 2001-06)

The author created hundreds of drawings throughout this research-period to delineate, develop and represent choreographic processes and works. Drawings presented within this thesis serve as an illustration and indication of the wider choreographic process.











APPENDIX 14

BOOK OF RECOMMENDATIONS: CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE

This book takes the shape of a distilled text, assuming the quality of a manifesto. Written by Michael Klien, Steve Valk and Jeffrey Gormly it outlines a new relevance of choreography and dance in the wider social sphere. Parts of the text are quoted throughout this thesis. Supported by the Arts Council, this book has been published by Daghdha Dance Company.

Klien, M. and Valk, S., & Gormly, J. (2008), *Books of Recommendations: Choreography as An Aeshtetics of Change*, Limerick: Daghdha

APPENDIX 15

CHOREOGRAPH.NET

Choreograph.net was founded by Michael Klien and Davide Terlingo in 2001 and brought to Daghdha Dance Company in 2004. Between 2004-06 it had been one of the largest online resources for choreography, a forum-based community of practitioners sharing matters of choreography and dance. In 2007, under editor Jeffrey Gormly, it has been re-developed as an online journal focusing on how we recognise, cultivate and negotiate a state of dance in human and other systems, whilst promoting choreography as a new and open metaphor.

The screenshot shows the homepage of choreograph.net. At the top left is the logo 'choreograph.net' and the tagline 'A STATE OF DANCE'. To the right, it says 'FOUNDED BY MICHAEL KLIEN AND DAVIDE TERLINGO / EDITED BY JEFFREY GORMLY' and 'EDITOR [AT] CHOREOGRAPH [DOT] NET'. Below this is a navigation menu with links: 'home / articles / letters / thoughts / raw thinking / about / contact / feed' and a search box. The main content area features a large article titled 'lead article: of ethics of choreography of' by Jeffrey Gormly, published on 28 August 2008. To the right of this article is an 'editorial 2.9' by Jeffrey Gormly, published on 4 September 2008. Below the main article are three columns: 'recent articles' by our writers, 'raw thinking' by our writers, and 'letters welcome' by Jeffrey Gormly. The 'recent articles' column lists several articles, including 'dialogue: space to play' and 'LEAD ARTICLE: choreography as an aesthetics of change'. The 'raw thinking' column lists 'notes on "my" EINEM' and 'flexistential cookbook: applied science fiction'. The 'letters welcome' column includes a message from the editor and a 'more' link.

App. 14, fig. 1: Screenshot: <http://www.choreograph.net> (4/9/2008)

APPENDIX 16

ELENA GIANNOTTI: SENSE AND MEANING: ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Klien presented a series of questions to dancer Giannotti to include and consider her positions on dance and improvisation, specifically in regards to performing 'Sense and Meaning' (Klien and Giannotti, 2008).

Giannotti, E., (2008), Sense and Meaning: Answers to your Questions,

Email to: Michael Klien (michael@daghdha.ie)

1) What does improvisation mean to you from a performers perspective?

Talking from a performer's perspective, for me improvisation is a form that allows potentiality to manifest. Improvisation is also about self-expression. It is a form that allows the dancer to be released from the responsibility of the formed and to engage with the un-preconceived forming. Self-expression is about the experiences that happened to the individual and what has made the individual what she is. Experiences are embodied and become memories, unconscious thoughts, way of moving, physicality; through dance these experiences are revealed, not by narration but through the body moving which holds more than our conscious mind can tell.

Each time it is a revelation for the performer to find places and states of being, emotional situations, to re-experience dancing, but also to create these experiences as embodied immediacies. Improvisation it is like a creature living, creating its own environment and inhabiting it at the same time, at any given moment.

2) Do you feel you are improvising when performing Klien's work? If so, what, if anything, sets it apart from other schools of improvisation (from a performers perspective)? If not, what are you doing?

This question is difficult. If I sign up for improvisation versus structure I end up in a black hole. I'll make an attempt to sign up for improvisation versus preconceived boundaries. In this case I can consider improvisation having no boundaries other than the ones imposed by reality and the limited nature of the human being. Choreography is then a thought pre-act (if thinking is an act) that limits potentiality in certain directions. Now, having done that I feel very much that I can leave this and concentrate on the particular: In my perspective there are paths crossing in Michael's work. He uses the capacity that dancers have to improvise a response to a certain given environment. First of all the dancer has to understand the philosophical premises of the work. Having done that, the structure is quite clear (not simple though!!!); at this point the dancer navigates in the structure with his own means, his own strategies, keeping in mind the given or 'formed on the way' boundaries.

In general I see a choreographic process as a 'problem' that needs to be solved. Some choreographers propose the problem, during the process, to the dancer and once she finds a good solution, she is asked to repeat or redefine that one solution every time on stage. In Michael's work every time I perform I am allowed to find a different solution to the same problem. Now the question is: is choreography in the problem or in the solution? I guess for me is in the formulation of the problem and/or in the capacity of recognizing the 'better' solution (from the eyes of the choreographer of course). When I am in the latter situation, I feel, as a dancer, that I can only function if I agree with, or trust the decision making of, the choreographer, so that I can stand for it 100%.

The problem formulation is a matter of thought, of how people think: it is an epistemological issue. The recognition of the better solution is about aesthetic perception: it is about art. In the way I understand Michael, he is interested in the former issue; so I feel in his work he is coherent with his philosophical premises. Of course Michael has his aesthetics and it is like a field with mines underneath. There are negative boundaries where I know I shouldn't step on and that brings us back to the crossing paths situation. Coming back to improvisation, I can't think of 'schools' talking about improvisation. Improvisation is taught through a series of tools to facilitate awareness.

3) What are you foremost concerned with, how do you consider your role, when working with Klien?

My role as a dancer is complex, because the choreography is complex. First of all I am very challenged in approaching the structures that Michael proposes, because they allow me to expand my way of thinking and getting to know Michael's world. I also think that I am very lucky as Michael trusts me as holder of his work on stage and we engage in a deeper dialogue each time. My role is to understand the philosophical premises of the work, the context in respect of what I produce as "movement" and Michael's unspoken aesthetics, which is nonetheless very strong.

4) *In What sense do you subscribe to 'Sense and Meaning' being a Choreography?*

Choreography is for me about vision. A vision defines a territory. A territory has boundaries, which determines what belongs and what doesn't belong to the territory. In improvisation this territory doesn't exist, the boundaries are dictated by the limits of our nature as human beings. The form created is a perturbation in the sky, forming a dense substratum that dissolves after the dance is over. Improvisation belongs to the realm of applied philosophy, what the eastern people call: way of life. Improvisation is about the thoughts of today informed by apperception (the history of your experienced perception of reality); it is about what happened to you, what you know, what you think you know and in lucky days about what you don't know. In Choreography there is a territory (call it structure) and is not transient: it can expand or shrink, shift or be effected, even change but it is constant. In 'Sense and Meaning' the territory is constant. I don't exit the territory unless Michael asks me to do so, creating in this way a new territory.

It is a valid question for myself as well: how do I define when I am improvising or choreographing my own performance? Next time maybe...

5) *Are you performing a piece or a living process or both? Could the approach to dance be formulated as a style (i.e.: system of probabilities) or a practice? Or something else?*

I say that the approach to dance it is more like a system of probability than a style, in the sense that for me a style is a description of a system of probability and not the system itself. Because the structure of 'Sense and Meaning' is so complex and rich, I feel

I am still immersed in the process and I am dancing the process on stage taking in those occasions, the chance to challenge myself on the notion of performativity.

As I have said to Michael, maybe in ten years we will see if this ongoing choreographic process will crystallize into a stable realm or if it will never do so because of its very nature. I guess it is what experimental work is about, about not knowing the outcome.

APPENDIX 17

FRAMEMAKERS: CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE

This book presents one of the outcomes of a series of events organised by Daghdha Dance Company (Limerick, Ireland) between 2005 and 2008. Edited by Jeffrey Gormly, this collection of essays sketches out an extended understanding of choreography and dance. Contributors include Milton Aylor, Noel Charlton, Peter Harries-Jones, Georg Ivanovas, Gordon Lawrence, Frederick Steier, Steve Valk and others. Supported by the Arts Council, this book has been published by Daghdha Dance Company.

Gormly, J., (ed.) (2008), *Framemakers: Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, Limerick: Daghdha