

# MOVING IN CONCERT

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## Abstract

This article explores both the social and the artistic capacity to move in concert with others. It first provides examples of the everyday ways in which nonhuman as well as human animate forms of life move in concert with one another. Thinking in movement is highlighted in this context and then throughout the article. Also highlighted and exemplified from various perspectives is the fact that infants are not pre-linguistic but that language is post-kinetic. Attention is furthermore called to the silence of movement and to the power of kinetic silence. Sociopolitical human examples are detailed that show how moving in concert has the possibility of enhancing corporeally-awakened and corporeally-inflected social sensibilities and relationships. In elucidating the artistic capacity to move in concert, the article focuses on the qualitative dynamics of movement, on the dynamic line created by movement, on improvisation, and on the “interior” and “exterior” of movement. The article concludes with a convergence of insights by two distinct but equally esteemed modern dance choreographers – Doris Humphrey and Merce Cunningham – and with observations on the history of harmoniously moving together in dance.

## Keywords

Social sensibilities and relationships; creativity; kinesthesia; qualitative dynamics; improvisation; distinguishing between the kinesthetic and the kinetic; distinction of kinesthesia from proprioception; movement as a *sensu communis*

Moving in concert names something not commonly described, namely, the way in which, in the silence of movement itself, animate forms of life move together harmoniously without disruption or slips. When we see a flock of birds take off from one perch and fly to another, or see a herd of cattle take off and run elsewhere as if suddenly jolted, or when we see a herd of any wild animal take off to escape a predator, all of them quickly taking off, we see them *moving in concert*. Whether a matter of flying straight away to another perch or of running this way and that in agitation or terror, we see them moving together without bumping into each other, without running each other down, and so on. We experience a further example of moving in concert not directly but indirectly when we run down stairs “1–2–3”: body parts are moving in concert; neurons are moving in concert; muscles are moving in concert. What we experience in a felt bodily sense are not the myriad inside coordination dynamics of body parts, neurons, and muscles, but the singular kinesthetically felt

dynamics of a smooth, flowing run down stairs. Moving in concert, of course, is not limited to fast, quick movement. When we do something as simple as handing a package to someone and that someone takes the package from us without our letting it go too fast and without the person letting it slip from his or her grasp, we are moving in concert.

Moving in concert means moving together in ways that are harmonious. I would like to explore this meaning first in therapeutic terms – therapeutic not in a strictly psychiatric or psychological sense, but therapeutic in the sense of awakening and facilitating socially-enhanced sensibilities and modes of relating to others. I will initially call attention in this context to the silence of movement. We are so used to words linguistically anchoring our relationships with others that we forget that we come into the world moving and that movement is our mother tongue (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011). I will proceed from this socially therapeutic context to an exploration of moving in concert in artistic performances, focusing especially on dance. In actual performances of dance, our attention as dancers and as audience is on the unfolding qualitatively rich dynamic that is movement. In exploring both the social and aesthetic significance of moving in concert, I will highlight how the ability to move harmoniously with others – to move in concert – necessarily involves the capacity to think in movement.

### **I. Moving in concert: Kinetic social sensibilities and relationships**

To move among others is to be part of an interanimate world. To move in concert with others is, as indicated, to move in harmony with them. To be able to do so is to think in movement, not just one's own movement but one's own movement in conjunction with the movement of others. What might be regarded as the proverbial instance of such thinking is when, on a crowded sidewalk, we move this way and that to avoid bumping into others: we bend a bit to the side or even step to the side; we duck to avoid being struck by an umbrella; and so on. This mode of thinking, however, goes back to our infancy and even prenatal life. That it does so is evidenced in the fact that kinesthesia and tactility are the first sensory systems to develop neurologically. As fetuses, we put our thumb in our mouth, for example, and kick our legs. In-utero research studies of Swedish medical doctors document these fetal movement realities in detail. Their findings warrant quotation. At eleven weeks, they write, the muscles of fetuses "are already at work" and the movements of fetuses "become gradually more coordinated by the developing nervous system. The lips open and close, the forehead wrinkles, the brows – that is, the area of skin where they will be located – rise, and the head turns". They observe further that "[a]ll these motions will gradually develop into searching and sucking reflexes, vital when the newborn baby is to find the breast and start eating. The facial expression will also signal to adults how the baby feels and if it wants something. Wordless language is necessary at first. This is no heavy-weight exercising his muscles – the fetus weighs three quarters of an ounce, the weight of an ordinary letter" (Furuhjelm et al., 1976, p. 91).

Clearly, from the very beginning, moving in concert is of moment in both an inside and outside sense, as indicated by kinesthetically felt body parts moving in concert and by neurons and

muscles moving in concert. The dynamics of moving in concert in fetal life and beyond are clearly integral to learning one's body and learning to move oneself. Just as clearly, such wordless learning is propelled and sustained by thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981 / exp. version 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009; see also Sheets-Johnstone, 2014d). "Wordless language" is not just "necessary at first", as the Swedish doctors affirm; it is necessary throughout life, and in fact is not a language at all, but a naturally developing kinesthetic-kinetic repertoire anchored phylogenetically as well as ontogenetically. In other words, it is a repertoire not only of humans but of other animate forms of life, a repertoire intimately bound to social sensibilities and interactions and articulated in the silence of movement.

In our infancy, our primary mode of relating to others is in and through movement, just as our primary mode of relating to our surrounding world is in and through movement. Is it any wonder, then, that our first mode of thinking is *thinking in movement*? (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981 / exp. version 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009). While we might believe crying to be simply a series of sounds, it is something we do – and can do – *only by moving*, by opening our mouths and making audible sounds. Crying is in fact an expression of our primal animation. We are indeed sound-makers in virtue of our capacity to move ourselves and in ways that testify to movement inside and out in a social sense: crying resounds not just in our own ears but in the ears of others. In our infancy, it initially brought others to us; it elicited the movement of others who, in what psychiatrist D. W. Winnicott (1990, e.g. pp. 119, 120) would identify as "good enough" parents and caretakers, would move in ways harmonious with our needs. On the basis of such experiences, we learned that by making certain sounds, others would come to our rescue, answer to our needs, or help us in some way.


It is hardly surprising then that, however much we neglect acknowledgment of it by giving first place to thinking in words, *thinking in movement* constitutes our primary mode of thinking that evolves along multiple lines throughout our lives. Giving preeminence to linguistic thinking ignores the fact that speaking a language is itself a faculty rooted in movement, i.e. in the delicate making of sounds that for their very articulation require from the beginning, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, developing awarenesses that not simply qualify as thinking in movement but that constitute thinking in movement. Though obviously not linguistically formulated, an infant may very well at times question: "What must I do to make this particular sound?" In this context, we might recall experimental evidence showing that newborn infants who mimic the tongue movements of others correct their imitations when they find that the tongue movement they have made is not a correct imitation (Meltzoff and Moore, 1977, 1983). In sum, though the word "infant" means "one unable to speak", *infants are not prelinguistic; language is post-kinetic* (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2010a, 2014c).

In this context, it is furthermore of interest to note with respect to *the brain*, and in particular to present-day near genuflections to *the brain*, that moving in concert and the thinking in movement that is integral to that ability coincide with well-known physiologist Roger Sperry's research investigations and conclusions showing that the brain is basically an organ of and for movement

(Sperry, 1952; see also Cotterill, 1995; Kelso, 1995). Moreover, it is not just what Sperry found through his research but what researchers in the area of *coordination dynamics* find in their study of brain and behavior (e.g. Kelso, 1995, 2009; Kelso et al., 2013; Kelso and Fuchs, 2016). Such research investigations and conclusions implicitly testify to the preeminence of movement both inside and out and thereby implicitly to a natural ability to think in movement and to move in concert with others. It is relevant too in this context to highlight well-known neuroscientist/neurophysiologist Marc Jeannerod's conclusion regarding the sensory modality of kinesthesia. After a thoroughgoing examination of "conscious knowledge about one's actions" and experimental research that might address the question of such knowledge, including experimental research dealing with pathologically afflicted individuals, Jeannerod (2006, p. 56) concluded: "There are no reliable methods for suppressing kinesthetic information arising during the execution of a movement."

As animate forms of life, we humans are born to move and learn to move effectively and efficiently in relation to others and to the world about us. In the beginning and to this end, we learn our bodies and learn to move ourselves (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd. ed. 2011). We explore our surrounding world and articulate our relationship to and with others in silence. We explore and articulate our desires and aversions, our fascinations and curiosities, our pleasures and fears, and while we might sound our delight or our apprehension, our wanting this or shunning that, we live a life preeminently in the silence of movement. In the course of doing so, we implicitly hone our capacity to think in movement. We successfully reach for and grasp a nearby toy and successfully kick an overhead mobile to make it move. We move in concert with others as well as with objects in the world when we open our arms toward someone who comes to pick us up and when we open our mouths in response to someone moving a spoon laden with food toward us. Moreover, we move harmoniously with others when we join our attention with theirs, looking in the same direction or at the same object in our surrounding world. We move harmoniously with them, furthermore, when we take turns in communicating with them in some way, as when we do something, then they do something, then we do something, and so on, all prior to the time when, ultimately, in verbal conversation, we say something, then they say something, and so on. *Joint attention* and *turn-taking* have in fact long been described as developmental accomplishments in infancy and early childhood (e.g. Scaife and Bruner, 1975; Stern, 1985; Carpendale and Lewis, 2012). They have not been described, however, in terms of their basic dynamic reality, namely, *movement*, the basic dynamic reality that grounds them. Short of recognizing and elucidating this basic dynamic reality, the foundational existential significance of movement fails to come to the fore, and with it, the developmental epistemological significance of thinking in movement. In consequence, that which undergirds our capacity to move in harmonious ways with others and with respect to our surrounding world goes unrecognized.

A striking demonstration of this lapse, or in positive terms, a striking recognition of movement, in particular, a recognition of both the social power of movement and of our native faculty to think in movement, was implicit in historian William Polk's decision to have sign language perfor-

mances as well as performances in English of dramatic works by Anton Chekov and Dylan Thomas at his international gathering of politicians for a Pugwash conference. We might in fact note that *turn-taking* by sign language performers and *joint attention* by the audience were basic elements in the success of Polk's innovative introduction of dramas performed by the National Theater of the Deaf. In "What It Means To Be Deaf" (Polk, 2013, p. 74), Polk describes the difference between being born deaf and becoming deaf. With reference to his daughter being born deaf, he writes: "In my daughter's experience, this meant that she missed what appears to be the crucial year or two during which hearing children begin to learn spoken language." He goes on to point out that what we learn early in life is "causal": "children absorb what happens around them. [...] The deaf child is thus cut off from knowledge that the rest of us get just by being there." After further insightful observations and descriptions of a range of experiences he created to expand his daughter's knowledge of the world, he goes on to point out that sign language "can be both beautiful and remarkably evocative". The example he gives in evidence of the beauty and evocative power of sign language is striking. He writes: "I witnessed a stunning example of this when my then organization, the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs, sponsored the twentieth Pugwash Conference on nuclear arms. We assembled 109 representatives of most of the Academies of Science from around the world, including a number of Nobel laureates. The exchanges were predictably difficult – the cold war was then in full blast – so in an attempt to relieve the tensions and to urge understanding, I arranged for the National Theater of the Deaf to put on two short skits: Anton Chekhov's spoof 'On the Harmfulness of Tobacco' in Russian and sign language and Dylan Thomas's 'Songs from Milkwood' in English and sign language." Polk then states that he introduced the evening "by saying that I hoped 'that in our troubled times the direct visual language of the deaf can perhaps communicate more effectively across the world boundaries'" . He then remarks: "What I really meant, of course, is that if the deaf can manage to 'hear' one another across the barrier of enforced silence, there is no excuse for the rest of us not to communicate. The plays changed the mood of the gathering and, many participants subsequently told me, their own approach to international understanding." Polk's innovative approach to political strife is a moving testimony to the power of kinetic silence.

Moving in harmony with others is clearly a social phenomenon – a silent social phenomenon – that has – or can have – sizeable political implications. That it has or can have such implications is surely of special moment in this strife-ridden 21st-century world. In particular, to move in concert is an elemental and reciprocal being-with-others that opens all participants to the possibility of being not just intellectually attuned to a common good, but *kinetically tuning to* a common good by moving in concert with others. This kinetic coming together toward a common good might be described in Sartrean terms (Sartre, 1956) as one's being kinetically for others as one is kinesthetically for oneself. Balancing and choosing in this way are not abstract reflective manoeuvres but actively lived-through structures of thinking in movement, actively lived-through discriminations and judgments that in the very moment and process of moving resonate harmoniously both for oneself and for others. We see these discriminations and judgments in the kinetic harmony of infant and

parent interchanges described by infant psychiatrist and clinical psychologist Daniel Stern (1985) as “affect attunement”. We see them, furthermore, in the kinetic harmony of team players moving cooperatively toward a goal in soccer or hockey or football; we see them in the kinetic harmony of two female tigers in their tracking and pursuit of a prey animal and in the concerted labors of beavers building a dam; and we, of course, see them most surely in the kinetic harmony of dancers in learning a dance and in dancing the dance, whether choreographed or improvised. In short, being equally for oneself and for others in kinetically harmonious ways draws on our natural capacity to move in concert and on our native faculty to think in movement.

It warrants emphasis that especially in a global sense, this natural capacity to move harmoniously with others is not commonly recognized. But then neither is our native faculty to think in movement. Yet clearly, when given the opportunity, it is not simply possible for people to “hear” one another in and through movement, as Polk would say; it is *edifying* for people to “hear” one another in and through movement. Sign language performances indeed demonstrate this awakening. One might in fact wonder whether such an awakening would take place as it did at the Pugwash Conference if members at international political meetings not only saw a performance by deaf performers but would begin their own conversation by moving together improvisationally – in concert, in silence – and in turn find a similar shift in mood and attitude toward international understanding. Clearly, members would need to clear their heads of spoken words and begin thinking in movement. In so doing, they might possibly realize that they are not simply national or cultural representatives, but are first and foremost animate beings who inhabit an animate world that is larger than their own national or cultural heritage, a world that in fact joins them all in a common creaturehood and a common humanity.

However seemingly idealistic or saccharine, this move toward a communal movement conversation would be potentially therapeutic precisely in awakening and enhancing social sensibilities and relationships. Participants in the silent conversation would indeed have the opportunity to draw on their natural but commonly dormant capacity to listen to their own movement and the movement of others, to balance and to choose *kinetically*, and thus to move harmoniously with others – or in resistance to them (of which more momentarily). In contrast to their normal meetings where words dominate, and indeed, where words commonly go in front of the person speaking in just the way Sartre (1956, p. 258) describes the look of another going in front of his/her eyes, all persons would be livingly present, here-and-now not simply in the flesh, but in the full-body wholeness of their kinetically-inclined feelings and qualitatively-inflected, kinesthetically-felt movement dynamics. In moving in concert with others in harmonious ways, they would create ongoing synergies of meaningful movement, both for themselves and for others. Just such synergies would constitute their conversation, an ongoing kinetically dynamic conversation that would have distinctive shadings and prominences, distinctive openings and closings, distinctive hesitations and quicknesses, and much, much more. In short, a thoroughly lively and engaging conversation would be constituted in the rich silence of movement.

Moving in concert in sociopolitical ways attests to the fundamental sociopolitical significance of movement, and thereby to the fact that moving in concert is not limited to the navigation of a crowded street in ways that avoid bumping into other persons or even to turn-taking in everyday conversations with others. Such realities of everyday life are of substantive significance but not exhaustive. The capacity to move in concert with others is in fact ripe if not overflowing with other possibilities. These possibilities include the possibility of moving in resistance to others. A striking experiment conducted by Stern and colleagues illustrates this possibility. Before describing the experiment, I should first note the context in which Stern relates details of the experiment and its results. That context has to do with the nature of a “core self”. On the basis of his own extended and meticulous studies of infants, Stern shows that a core self is developmentally constituted in infancy on the basis of four essential self-experiences: “self-agency, self-coherence, self-affectivity, and self-history.” As he emphasizes in discussing these experiences, the core self is not a cognitive construct but an integration of experienced realities. Though he does not specify them as such, these realities are clearly rooted in *the tactile-kinesthetic body*. Self-agency, self-coherence, self-affectivity, and self-history are indeed all described explicitly or implicitly by Stern in terms of *movement*. Moreover, a “core other” emerges in the course of a core self. The most real-life, real-time example of this *co-constitution* is precisely in the experiment Stern and colleagues carried out on Siamese twins, twins who were born in the hospital where they worked. The twins were attached ventrally, between umbilicus and sternum and thus faced each other. The experiment turned on the response of each twin who, while sucking her own fingers or the fingers of her twin, experienced the fingers being pulled away, the experimenter pulling on that particular twin’s arm. Stern and colleagues found that when the twin was sucking her own fingers, the twin resisted her fingers being dislodged from her mouth, thus resisted her arm being pulled away, and that, in contrast, when she was sucking the fingers of her twin, she strained her head forward in pursuit of the withdrawing fingers but made no resistant movement with her arm.

Clearly, the twins had not a *postural* sense of themselves, but a tactile-kinesthetically anchored felt sense of themselves, a *dynamic* sense that confirms not only *a sense of agency* but an integrated and holistic sense of oneself based specifically on the felt-perceptual-cognitive experience of oneself and the felt-perceptual-cognitive experience of an other-than-onese. The experiment indeed validates the centrality and pivotal significance of the tactile-kinesthetic body across a broad range of what might be termed essential existential accomplishments: its centrality to, and pivotal significance in the capacity to discriminate among bodies; its centrality to, and pivotal significance in the very constitution of bodies other than oneself; its centrality to, and pivotal significance in the capacity not just to respond, but to respond thoughtfully, i.e. to think in movement; and finally, its centrality to, and pivotal significance in moving in concert with another, both by following the directional pull of another in the one instance, and by resisting that directional pull in the other instance by moving or attempting to move in opposition to it. While the latter resistant movement might be judged a *non-harmonious* way of moving in concert, it is a way that may more

properly be described as a harmonious move that parries and that by parrying is protective in a way similar to one's parrying another's move that threatens one's well-being, or that indeed might be experienced as oblivious of one's well-being. Children from time to time move in this resistant parrying way in their play with overly rambunctious or careless playmates. Moreover, dancers might experience this parrying in an improvisational dance or in the rehearsal of a choreographed dance when other dancers begin moving them in a way unheeding of their flexibility or strength. In short, moving in concert in the everyday world or the world of dance may well involve resistant movement in the service of protection. On the other hand, moving in concert in a resistant way is actually essential to some forms of play, to a tug of war, for example. Parrying is in fact essential to keep the playful tugging competition going. On a more general level, parrying is a resistant move that is highly developed in competitive sports such as soccer, hockey, and US football where it is not only a matter of protection, whether of oneself, one's teammates, or the team's goal, but a straightforward matter of parrying the opposing team in ways that prevent their scoring.

In instances where resistant parrying is protective or where it keeps a game or a competition going, it remains in the service of moving in concert. Indeed, without resistant parrying, many a game or competition would be nonexistent, and, with respect to protection, one might oneself become nonexistent. What is centrally at moment, however, in all instances of moving in concert is the fact that to move harmoniously with others, including moving resistantly, requires not just an awareness and knowledge of the body one is, but *an awareness and knowledge of the body one is not*. Moving harmoniously with others indeed has the possibility of ever heightening awarenesses and knowledge of the bodies one is not, of hearing others in a different medium. The experience of hearing ourselves kinesthetically and hearing others kinetically puts us in touch with our common aliveness, our common capacity for play, for instance, thus with both our common capacity to resonate harmoniously with others and our common capacity to expand the horizons of our knowledge of ourselves and of others and to grow from that knowledge. In short, it puts us in touch with our mother tongue and its inherent dynamics. In doing so, it puts us in touch with ourselves and with others in perhaps the deepest possible way that borders on the density of their being as well as our own. Though culturally inflected in various ways, both subtle and complex, our mother tongue nonetheless binds us in a common humanity, and indeed in a common creaturehood. By speaking it more often with others and listening to it more often with others, we might recognize that common humanity to begin with and move beyond a blinkered – small-minded – notion of those who are other. This existential awareness and knowledge are as pertinent, or at least as potentially pertinent, to international bodies – international organizations and institutes – as they are to everyday animate bodies in their customary movement lives – to pedestrians, drivers, playmates, team members, and dancers – all of them in what we might call their “movement meetings”. The difference between meeting in words and meeting in movement is a critical difference in thinking, a difference that warrants recognition precisely because that recognition leads to the possibility of enhanced corporeally-awakened and corporeally-inflected social sensibilities and relationships.



## II. Moving in concert: Creativity in art

When we think about moving in concert in terms of artistic performances, an odd observation may come to mind. Orchestral music concerts have a conductor. Theater performances have no conductor. Opera performances have no conductor: though there is a conductor for the orchestra, there is no conductor for the singers. Dance concerts have no conductor. One might explain the conductor in orchestral music concerts by the fact that there are so many different instruments making such distinctive sounds that a conductor is needed to pull them together into a harmonious whole. They are in a sense all talking at the same time and thus need to be regulated by an outsider. In theater, actors do not all talk at the same time, but take turns talking. While there is just such turn-taking in opera, there is also singing at the same time, as in duets, trios, and quartets in which individual singers sing in unison but along their own melodic line. Something similar but not quite the same holds for dance: there may be turn-taking, as when one dancer reaches out a hand and another dancer grasps it, but more often there is moving at the same time, and indeed, at times in larger groups than quartets, groups more like the chorus in opera.

The question of why there is no conductor in theater, opera, and dance leads one to wonder what holds the performance together. One might answer that in theater actors have rehearsed their lines, know their lines, and thus know when to speak and not to speak. In opera, singers similarly have rehearsed and know their melodic lines, and hence know too when to give voice to them and when to be silent. In both theater and opera, however, it is not just a matter of knowing one's lines and when to voice them, but a matter of dynamics, of a felt sense of flow as in qualitatively shaped inflections, pauses, and so on, and further, a matter of the dynamics of others who are there in performance with one. In dance, it is again similar but different, and this because it is not a question of language, whether spoken or sung, but of movement, and of movement alone. Dancers too have rehearsed, not lines that are voiced but lines that are the dynamic lines of movement itself (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/1979/1980/2015a). Moving in concert in dance hinges precisely on the felt kinesthetic awareness of those dynamic lines, *their qualitatively shaped intensities, expansions and contractions, quick impulses and attenuations, and so on*, and on the thinking in movement that allows mastery of those dynamic lines.<sup>1</sup> Correlatively, it hinges on the kinetic awareness of the dynamic lines of other dancers who are there in performance with one.

In everyday verbal conversations with others, words flow easily out of our mouths. How is this possible? Why do we not have to think word by word about what we want to say, put those words in order, memorize them, and then say them aloud. After all, it is not as if we have said

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1 The qualitative interrelationship of the spatial, temporal, and energetic character of any movement as it unfolds gives any movement a particular dynamic line, a line that, as described in detail in *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/1979/1980/2015a), may be vocalized, and is in fact at times spontaneously vocalized by a choreographer to dancers in the process of their learning the dance as well as by teachers of dance in their attempt to communicate a desired or proper dynamic flow of a movement or movement phrase to students.

this and that sentence before and so have a formidable reserve of whole sentences we have memorized and can draw on. Yet we speak in conversation with others quite extemporaneously. Our verbal conversations are creative in this sense. We listen to what is being creatively presented to us and respond in verbal kind, running off strings of words on our own. Moving together as well as talking together: what could be more natural?

Moving together, however, may well put us at the brink of largely unexplored territory. Depending upon our previous experience, moving together creatively, that is, running off dynamic lines of movement that are unrehearsed in any way, may plunge us into a largely unknown domain, namely, into the felt qualitative dynamics of our own moving bodies – the felt qualitative dynamics of surprise, for instance, that might take the form of a joyous leap forward or a tense and constricting pull backward. However large the unexplored territory, we may well ask whether we do not need to plunge into just such dynamic happenings to carry us forward, to sweep us off our seats, so to speak, into the afterlife of postmodernism, critical theory, deconstructionism, the year of the brain, and other kinetically immobilizing academic movements. When we improvise together in movement, we find that, precisely because movement is our mother tongue, we do not need a teacher or a class situation; neither do we need to fear being put on the spot since, moving together, there is no spot on which anyone can be put.

Because movement comes with life, we actually have the capacity to improvise in multiple ways. Just as words come forth through breath, through a moving tongue, and through an accommodating supralaryngeal track, so lines come forth from moving crayons and paint-filled brushes; sounds come forth from moving fingers at the piano and from breath and moving lips at the trumpet; and so on. We can indeed improvise in multiple ways. When we improvise simply with movement, however, *nothing but movement comes forth*. The improvisation is self-contained. It resonates with its own pure kinetic dynamics – and leaves no traces behind. No wonder Merce Cunningham (1968, unpaginated) observed that dancing “is not for unsteady souls”.

When we move in concert improvisationally with others, we attune ourselves to a communally constituted dynamic that is fleeting, that precisely does not stay still. In the course of experiencing this fleeting dynamic, we might experience ourselves not just *being alive* but *feeling* that aliveness – and moreover feeling that aliveness among a host of others whose aliveness is infectious and whom we trust. While the factual notion of being alive if one is moving or can move is commonly recognized, there is commonly little recognition of the experiential possibility of moving and *being alive to one’s movement*. Unlike simply being alive, being alive to one’s movement is not a sign of anything and is certainly not a state of being, but a dynamically unfolding kinesthetic experience. The same observations apply to *feeling alive*, since here too, there is commonly little recognition of the experiential possibility of *feeling alive* in virtue of movement. The lack of recognition is odd given that our everyday life is filled with movement. But everyday movement is virtually by definition habitual movement, not improvised movement, and habitual movement rarely calls up feelings of aliveness. On the contrary, attention is commonly directed elsewhere

– as when, in dressing ourselves in the morning, we find our thoughts and feelings tied to the chores or work that lie ahead of us this day. As detailed elsewhere however (Sheets-Johnstone, 2010b/2014a), when we surprise ourselves in our habits, we not only enliven our lives: we are alive to movement and to feeling our aliveness. Moreover, when we make a habit of surprising ourselves in our habits, we embark on an endless, potentially life-long creative adventure in feeling alive. We might in fact ask ourselves: When is the last time I surprised myself in my habits? When is the last time I felt that aliveness? Consider the following possibility:<sup>2</sup>

Suppose, for example, that you are sitting in a waiting room with nothing to do but wait. What can you do? You can make imperceptible-to-others, but keenly felt tiny circles all over your body, beginning maybe with your index fingers or your eyes, your shoulders, your knees, or your big toe, keeping in mind that you can vary the speed of those circles in ways that make their imperceptibility virtually absolute. You might end up circling your whole upper body on your seat. Wherever the circles, they bring a freshness to your life. You are no longer merely sitting but exploring movement possibilities in the process. In so doing, you cannot help but be attuned to the qualitative dynamics of the circles you are making: their possible variations in spatial amplitude; the fact they can go around in one direction, then reverse course and go in the other direction; the fact that they can go more quickly in one part of the circle and more slowly in another, or even that they go with difficulty in one instance and with ease in the other; and so on. However tiny the circles, they offer you dynamic possibilities that you can feel in distinctive ways, and this because each circle resonates kinesthetically in a distinctive qualitative dynamic.

What do these tiny circles have to do with moving in concert – particularly in dancing with others, whether improvisationally or in a choreographed work? They awaken us to our own creative possibilities in movement. In making these tiny circles, we are forming and performing movement and listening to ourselves moving. We are at the edge of being dancing bodies. We are perhaps even charting new territory for ourselves, creating and moving through dynamic patterns that we have perhaps never tried before, much less done before with such keen awareness. We might in this context recall thinking about all the places we have not explored or visited in person. We might similarly think about all the movement we have not explored or visited in person. In doing so, we might awaken ourselves to exploring the inherent qualitative dynamics of movement and thus the qualitative dynamics we witness when we attend a dance concert or other kind of dance performance (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966/1979/1980/2015a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015b). These qualitative dynamics are at the heart of dance as both a formed and performed art, a choreographed and performed work, and an improvisational work. Just as moving in concert in the common everyday sense awakens us to enhanced social sensibilities and relationships, so moving in concert in an extended sense, both as dancers and as members of an audience of dance, awakens us to enhanced

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2 A condensed version of a number of possibilities in Sheets-Johnstone (2014a).

aesthetic sensibilities and relationships. It does so precisely by turning our attention to the richness, subtleties, and complexities inherent in the qualitative dynamics of movement.

Moving in concert with others aesthetically means being alive to the ongoing qualitative flow of movement, being carried along experientially by a streaming dynamics, the sheer qualitative dynamics that constitute the dance. As dancers, it requires our being alive to both the dynamics of our own movement and the dynamics of the movement of others, being fully awake and present to the tensional shadings, amplitudes, directional changes, and so on, in the ongoing flow of movement that is the dance. Experiencing movement in concert with others as audience similarly requires being alive to the sheer qualitative dynamics of movement, fully awake and attentive to the now intense, now lax, now jagged, now smooth, now spacious, now contained, now explosive, now fading flow of those dynamics. What is essential to understand is the difference between dancers' *kinesthetic* and *kinetic* experience of movement in dancing the dance, and audience members' *kinetic* experience of movement in watching the dance. This understanding rests on a recognition of the fact that animate movement has an interior and an exterior, as philosopher and founder of the discipline of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, recognized (Sheets-Johnstone, 2005/2009, 2008, pp. 194–196; see also Overgaard, 2003). With respect to that interior and exterior, what is essential to recognize is that the qualitative dynamics that constitute movement are there, livingly present in both aspects, but are differentially experienced. The interior of movement is experienced kinesthetically and is felt as an ongoing qualitative dynamic; the exterior of movement is experienced kinetically and is perceived as an ongoing qualitative dynamic. The difference between a *kinesthetically felt qualitative dynamic* and a *kinetically perceived qualitative dynamic* is thus essential to any veridical analysis and description of moving in concert, whether in purely social contexts or aesthetic contexts, that is, to any understanding of “I and Other” movement relations.

A few critical remarks are warranted in this respect. To begin with, kinesthesia cannot be properly expanded beyond its personal reality as a sensory modality – as in “enkinaesthesia” (Stuart, 2012), for example, or in “kinesthetic exchanges” (Rothfield, 2005), or in “interkinesthetic relationality” (Behnke, 2008). To begin with, all such social extensions of kinesthesia obscure even further the experienced felt qualitative dynamics of one's own movement. These qualitative dynamics are a foundational human sensory modality, foundational both in the sense that kinesthesia, along with tactility, is the first sensory modality to be neurologically developed and in the sense of our being movement-born – precisely not stillborn. The terms “enkinesthesia”, “kinesthetic exchanges” and “interkinesthesia” furthermore obscure the difference between these felt dynamics and the perceived dynamics of others; that is, they obscure the difference between the interior and exterior of movement, what is there kinesthetically and what is there kinetically. One might even say that they not only obscure the felt qualitative dynamics of one's own movement and the difference between kinesthetic and kinetic experiences of movement, but obscure even further the experience of animate movement more than it is already obscured in talk of motor control, motor learning, and so on, as well as in talk of dancers and audiences “proprioceiving” the dance being danced

(Montero, 2006): proprioception is a sense whereby dancers “proprioceive their movement” (ibid., p. 231); proprioception is an “internal representation of movement” (ibid., p. 240) whereby we, as audience, “are proprioceiving the dancer’s movements” (ibid., p. 238; see further comments in this text, Section III).

The foundational challenge with respect to such terms and obscurations is *to connect the visual and the kinesthetic*, the visual in terms of its *kinetic dynamics* and the kinesthetic precisely in terms of kinesthesia. In short, that the same qualitative dynamics inhere in the interior and exterior of movement warrants recognition. Only then can the qualitative dynamics of movement come to the fore in their dual kinesthetic and kinetic realities. The sizeable challenge of phenomenologically homing in on the experience of moving in concert, and with respect to social sensibilities and relationships as well as aesthetic sensibilities and relationships, can only be met by recognizing a kinesthetically experienced qualitative dynamics and a visually experienced kinetic qualitative dynamics, both of which are of the same foundational spatio-temporal-energetic “stuff”, but differentially experienced. Their sameness and their difference are quintessentially important to recognize, for their sameness and difference indicate a natural ability to experience the qualitative dynamic reality of movement whether “interior” or “exterior”, that is, whether kinesthetically felt or kinetically perceived.

### III. Concluding remarks

Observations and remarks by two highly distinct but equally notable modern dance pioneers, Doris Humphrey and Merce Cunningham, keenly and provocatively highlight the sensory modality of kinesthesia in the context of both movement and emotions.

Doris Humphrey analyzed movement into four elements, elements that she found to be the integral basis of dance, namely, design, dynamics, rhythm, and motivation. I quote from her book *The Art of Making Dances* (1959, p. 46):

Every movement made by a human being, and far back of that, in the animal kingdom, too, has a design in space; a relationship to other objects in both time and space; an energy flow, which we will call dynamics; and a rhythm. Movements are made for a complete array of reasons involuntary or voluntary, physical, psychical, emotional or instinctive – which we will lump all together and call motivation. Without a motivation, no movement would be made at all. So, with a simple analysis of movement in general, we are provided with the basis for dance, which is movement brought to the point of fine art. The four elements of dance movement are, therefore, design, dynamics, rhythm, and motivation.

Interestingly enough, Humphrey goes on to specify just how she will work with students, especially in light of what she identifies as “[o]ne of the famous definitions of choreography”, namely, that choreography is “the arranging of steps in all directions” (ibid.). After giving her analysis of movement, she states: “So now the student is called upon to think in terms of elements rather than steps” (ibid., p. 47). To think in movement is indeed to think in terms of the quintessential

elements of *movement*, not piecemeal in terms of steps or positions, and certainly not in terms of motor control or motor skills (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981 / exp. version 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009). These quintessential elements of *movement* are of course directly related to kinesthesia. In fact, both Humphrey and Cunningham underscore the prime significance of kinesthesia to movement and to dance.

Humphrey affirms the centrality of kinesthesia to life by calling attention to its neglect and to our need to resuscitate it. She points out that “[w]hen man ceased to run and leap for his food the decay of the kinesthetic sense began”. Furthermore, she emphasizes that the sensory modality of kinesthesia “needs to be enlarged by education and training; nothing else about us”, she comments, “has been so much allowed to atrophy” (Humphrey, 1979, p. 61). Cunningham (1968, unpaginated) points to the fact that kinesthesia is a common human sensory faculty, and notably enough, affirms that “the kinesthetic sense [...] allows the experience of dancing to be part of all of us”. Though he does not spell out just how “the kinesthetic sense [...] allows the experience of dancing to be part of all of us”, his recognition of the fact that kinesthesia is a common human sensory faculty makes his affirmation virtually self-explanatory. We all move. We all thus have the potential to dance and to experience ourselves dancing, and though as members of an audience watching a dance we are not *kinesthetically engaged* in dancing the dance, we are *kinetically attuned* to the qualitative dynamics of movement that we are visually experiencing and that constitute the dance.

Humphrey’s and Cunningham’s observations are notable, even essentially so in terms of underscoring sensibilities to the bodies we are and the movement of those bodies, and sensibilities to the bodies we are not and the movement of those bodies. Their observations concerning the relationship of kinesthesia to emotions are equally notable, and again, even essentially so in light of the fact that they are pioneers of dance at distinctively different periods in the history of modern dance. Both Cunningham and Humphrey affirm the intimate tie between feelings and artistic expression. Humphrey writes of what she calls the emotional meaning overlaying kinesthesia, pointing out that this meaning “can be the whole reason for a dance”, in effect, that a dance does not need to tell a story (Humphrey, 1979, pp. 61–62). In effect, a dance can be a dance for the sheer sake of movement which, purely on its own, articulates an emotional resonance, whether that of joy, sadness, or fear, for example, or something more rarified as of eloquent symmetry or sharply cadenced phrasing from beginning to end. In writing of the relation of movement to emotion, Cunningham points out that “the sense of human emotion that a dance can give is governed by familiarity with the language, and the elements [music and costume] that act with the language” (Cunningham, 1968, unpaginated; see also Sheets-Johnstone, 1999b/2009). The language of which Cunningham writes is, of course, movement, our mother tongue, and its sensory correlate kinesthesia. Kinesthesia – and, it should be added, kinesthetic memory – is of obvious significance with respect to choreographing a dance and to what Cunningham at one point describes as “wearing it long enough, like a suit of clothes”. He utilizes the analogy when he is describing how he choreographed his dance *Untitled Solo*. He writes (ibid.):

A large gamut of movements, separate for each of the three dances, was devised, movements for the arms, the legs, the head and the torso which were separate and essentially tensile in character, and off the normal or tranquil body-balance. The separate movements were arranged in continuity by random means, allowing for the superimposition (addition) of one or more, each having its own rhythm and time-length. But each succeeded in becoming continuous if I could wear it long enough, like a suit of clothes.

This creative bringing-into-being together with the intimate tie between movement and emotion pertain directly to the aesthetics of moving in concert, to the actual forming of the work and its actual performance. They pertain equally – and no doubt obviously – to the essential, fundamental animate sensory modality of kinesthesia. This sense modality requires clear-cut evolutionary and functional separation from proprioception in order that the qualitative dynamics of movement be uncovered, elucidated, and understood.<sup>3</sup> Humphrey clearly recognized this requirement in her analysis of the fundamental elements of movement. In a different but equally cognizant way via “familiarity with the language”, Cunningham did likewise. Unfortunately, in present-day philosophical writings on movement and dance, the evolutionary and functional distinction between proprioception and kinesthesia is overlooked, which in good measure explains why the qualitative dynamics of movement fail to be recognized (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). In short, moving in concert in dance rests on enhanced understandings of movement and its kinesthetic/kinetic dynamics.

Moving in concert thus challenges dancers and audience alike in communal ways, ways that test their aesthetic sensibility to movement. As should be evident, for dancers, it is a matter of testing their aesthetic sensibility to dynamics, dynamics that are not just of their own making but dynamics that surround them and that at times literally move them. Of equal importance is the particular relationship of dancer to dance, that is, the relationship of the dancer to the movement he or she is learning and perfecting. While in learning the dance, dancers may be moving through the form, when perfected, *the form is moving through them – moving through them in concert* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2013b, 2014d). When the form moves through them rather than their moving through the form, the dance flows forth with an effortless fluidity such that the truth of Yeats’s famous question is experientially present before our eyes: “How can we know the dancer from the dance?”

The truth of Yeats’s famous question poses an aesthetic truth that sustains the very possibility of moving in concert in a creative artistic sense. Aristotle’s description of movement as a *sensu communis*, a sense common to all other senses, is of moment to consider in this context. As pointed

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3 For a detailed analysis of the distinction between kinesthesia and proprioception, see Sheets-Johnstone (1999b/2009), included as Chapter II, Part I in Sheets-Johnstone (1999a / exp. 2nd ed. 2011), and as Chapter VIII in Sheets-Johnstone (2009).

out in an earlier *Choros* article (Sheets-Johnstone, 2013b), although Aristotle did not recognize kinesthesia in his description, a further possible sense of movement as a *sensu communis* leads us precisely to an appreciation of kinesthesia and its qualitative dynamics. This further possible sense has to do with movement as a communal human capacity, not simply the communal capacity of all humans to move, but precisely *the communal capacity of all humans to move together in a common dynamic – to move in concert*. The communal capacity of humans to move together in a communal dynamic is indeed rooted in a *sensu communis*: in kinesthesia. Short of such a faculty, humans could hardly move in harmonious dynamic accord with one another. In effect, they would hardly have the possibility of moving in concert.

Again, as pointed out in the earlier *Choros* article, a harmonious dynamic accord among dancers traces back to ancient Greek culture and is realized in a circle. A circular spatial form is explicitly acknowledged in studies of ancient Greek dance. Historian of dance Lincoln Kirstein (1969, p. 28) calls attention to the fact that in its beginnings, ancient Greek dance “developed from the communal form of choral dance” in which dancers “[m]ost frequently [...] would move cyclically or circularly”. Dance historian Curt Sachs (1963, p. 238) documents what he calls “the round dance” by way of Homeric verse and Cretan sculptures, the latter “illustrat[ing] dances in a circle around the lyre player”, for example. Holding another’s wrist or hand in the formation of a communal circle binds people together in a communally felt unfolding dynamic: dancers move in dynamic accord with one another because they are kinesthetically bound in the same qualitative dynamic. A hand- or wrist-joined circular form, moreover, testifies to the basic truth that we humans are social animals: forming a circle together is tethered to our being social animals. Joining by hand or wrist with others to form a circle involves recognizing others as like oneself. Communal movement in the form of a joined circle is indeed a staple folk tradition across a range of cultures. That tradition validates the claim that movement is a *sensu communis* not only as sensorily affirmed but as socially affirmed. Movement is a *sensu communis* in being a communally felt qualitative kinesthetic/kinetic dynamic, a powerful means of socially recognizing our common humanity. But it is, furthermore, a *sensu communis* in the aesthetic reality of dance itself. For those engaged as dancers or as audience, the dynamics of movement are a moving experience, a powerful kinesthetic/kinetic aesthetic that resounds meaningfully on its own.

Recognition of movement as a *sensu communis* thus has sizable implications for moving in concert. Perhaps the practice of 21st-century dance will realize its potential to bring together, that is, to celebrate commonalities. Not that cultural differences are to be squelched or overridden – that is definitely *not* what is meant – but that, especially in this age of globalization where a wider and wider awareness of others becomes not a welcome reality but a threatening one, the ties that bind us in a common humanity and common creaturehood would be well to acknowledge, respect, and be given prominence, for they define in the most basic sense who we are: animate forms of life who, through their natural heritage, have both extraordinary possibilities of movement and the capacity to become keenly aware of those possibilities. The art of dance leads the way to those



possibilities by way of experiencing the sheer dynamics of movement and the thinking in movement that together anchor the practice, cultivation, and creativity of moving in concert.

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