

Dance and Mental Health: Actions of the Possible¹

Bruna Martins Reis

Universidade Estadual de Campinas - UNICAMP, Brasil

Renato Ferracini

Universidade Estadual de Campinas - UNICAMP, Brasil

Introduction

This essay takes as its starting point a practical training between art and psychology - specifically in dance and clinical psychology - and intends to reflect on a mode of artistic intervention in the field of Mental Health. It lies at the intersection between dance and clinical practice, considering that the practices of both areas activate experiences and devices that can create strategies to invent the self and of modes of existence. It is also part of an ongoing study, in which we aim to develop a cartography of these practices/interventions in the context of two mental health facilities² for the treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation of people with severe mental disorders.

We intend to raise some experiential aspects of this practice, opening the discussion about "doing in dance," a psychic and subjective practice that enables the construction of other relational modes, expanding possibilities for movements of presence and life; focusing on the deconstruction of habitual corporal modes as a way to access other perceptual registers, and thus recreate subjective territories.

In the study carried out at CAPS Toninho, we sought to systematize some of the

¹ A shorter version of this article was presented at the II Encuentro Latinoamericano de Investigadores/as sobre cuerpos y corporalidades en las culturas (II Latin American Encounter of Researchers, Bodies and Corporalities in Cultures) - Bogotá, Colombia - 2015.

² Thus far, this approach has been applied in the Centro de Atenção Psicossocial Antônio da Costa Santos (Center for Psychosocial Attention / CAPS Toninho), located in the city of Campinas, São Paulo. This service is part of the public Mental Health system of Campinas and targets adults from 18 to 80, of both sexes, afflicted with severe mental health problems.

practical procedures used to understand how this work revealed the peculiarities of what is produced during the actual encounters and can subsequently reverberate in life, engendering continuities and discontinuities. We were interested, throughout, in observing how the experience of dance, of dancing, in the context of mental health work can act to expand patients' possibilities of relating actively in life, from the most everyday aspects to the more subtle internal experiences. By potentializing other sensitivities, dance in this context can operate to activate processes of subjectivities³ that open the patient up to the reconstruction of self. These processes, when activated, allow the patient to compose other life landscapes, actualizing past empowering experiences often overlooked amid the stories of illness and loss.

Development

Because of the importance of the term "experience" here, it is important to address how the concept is used in this essay. First of all, we must understand that the concept of experience is not linked to experience as accumulation of knowledge (expertise in a particular subject) nor considered as a device leading to a proof (science experiment). To think of experience, here, we need to position it in a displacement of the concept of the individual subject and even from the "subject of experience." We must realize that in addition to the subject of the experience we are speaking about a field of experience.

Based on Spinoza's thought, the man-subject cannot be thought of in terms of full autonomy with his own will and rational intentions as a exclusively autonomous being, but as a degree of potentiality to affect and be affected. What I am, the

³ When we speak of 'subjectivities,' we are referring to something that mutates, in constant transformation, that carries in itself a process of subjectivization, or production of self. According to Passos (2000), this process takes place from multiple elements and relationships, going from family relationships to social factors, such as urban violence, the media, drug experience, participation in social movements, getting sick, among others; how aesthetic experiences are mediated by artistic effort or by simple appreciation of music, of dance, theater, cinema, literature, among other artistic experiences. In this sense, we can state that "subjectivity is defined by productive activity" (Passos, 2000 p. 1), where the subject appears as a product - not only as producer or passive subject - as a result of a process of production that is always of a collective nature. According to Guattari (1991, p.19), subjectivity is "the aggregate of conditions that make it possible for individual and/or collective instances to be in a position to emerge as existential territory," not configured as an entity or state of being in itself, but rather as a process of production, or set of conditions from which existential effects are produced. Always intersected with a collective, as long as that is composed of multiple vectors. Being thus, there are multiple entryways and multiple possible factors to activate such processes, as well as the various agencies, or assemblages, coming from them, in a context in which processes of subjectivization are also conceived as creative processes of "receptivity to creative composition" (Ferracini and Rabelo 2014, p. 12).

definition of man or subject, no longer goes through the crystalizing verb "is" (I am), but through the dynamic relationship of the capacity we have to affect and be affected, i.e., the "is" replaced by the capacity of the relation and composition of the forces that extend our ability (Spinoza's joyful affects) or those forces that diminish our capacity for action (Spinoza's sad affects)? What is the composition of capacity with such forces: Or as a typical Spinozist question: what can our body do? How does our body compose itself in this dynamic plane of forces? The answers to these questions do not go through the rationalization and/or categorization of the relationship of these forces (which forces are good or bad in the moral aspect), but through the experience of their composition. Therefore, to be inserted in the experiential plane is to be open, porous and receptive to the affects that this plane of dynamic forces contains while, at the same time, actively composing with it to seek, in an ethical form, to amplify the potentiality to act. An experiential plane does not only pass through the subject who experiences it, but the subject - thought here as a dynamic or as a subjectivization process - searches for compositions with this cartography of forces in which the subject/individual is simply a thread that makes up this plane and generates qualitative differences, creations and recreations in this composition. Thus, it is not the subject who creates the experience, but rather the subject is released in a continuous differentiation into the plane of experience. The actual subject is formed/differentiated/processed by the plane. The experiential plane is always first in relation to the subject while the subject (always as a differentiating process or singularity) affects and composes with the plane while modifying it. Paradoxically the experiential plane pre-exists the subject, but the subject always creates and recreates in his ability to compose affects. The experiential plane as a real plane of a micropolitics. It is therefore more important, here, to speak in terms of subjectivization processes than of a subject. Another important issue to be addressed about the experiential plane: it is always moved by tensions between its various threads and elements without any predictability of how the experiential process will result or how the plane will reconfigure itself in its re-composition. An experiential plane will always be dynamic, unpredictable, metastable and never teleological: the experiential plane as variability, unpredictability, composition and recreation and the territory of a dynamic cartography of forces, that is, an entire micropolitics not endorsed by a moral (in the

sense of hierarchies or cataloging a specific number of good and bad forces) but by a ethical composition of forces that determine increases or decreases of potential action.

Therefore, to discuss this practice in the field of performing arts is to comprehend that this concept of experience allows us to explore a strategy of doing/thinking dance in the social context, how it produces creative processes as it engages in the production of itself as an art of living. We consider, in this proposal, the desire to enable some conditions of a creative process in dance, in which one can enjoy corporal encounters as the necessary condition to cultivate other ways to relate with oneself and others, starting from the simple act of being in movement, to engage in research regarding states of presence and life.

Materialities that put the body/research in movement

We must speak of creation as tracing its path between impossibilities (...) Creation is done in strangling bottlenecks. (...) If a creator is not grabbed by the neck by a conjuncture of impossibilities, he is not a creator. A creator is someone who creates his own impossibilities, and at the same time creates a possible (Deleuze, 1992, p. 167).

What is the dancing body? I dare to answer that every individual can dance when he sees himself in his dance through his wanting and his feeling. The dancing body is what allows a dance state that is different for each one, for each soma [body]. Thus, dance is not something external, but a state that can be built with specific procedures when proposing to go on stage. Dance can also come from within the self, like that which the child practices with such spontaneity, the dance of all human beings, the somas that want to dance. There is dance where one sees dancing (Miller, 2012, p. 149).

In the words of Miller (2012, p. 9) "dance is a register of life, of force, expression, commitment, desire and passion." Also according to the author, in the act of dancing we can let loose other creative elements, honing stories in the body, since all life experiences are corporeally inscribed.

From a creative flow, the dancing body is allowed to explore possibilities of sensations and various reverberations, composing and re-composing at every moment, introducing significant ways in which the senses touch the sensitive in all spheres. In the way in which dance refers to the act of creation, it can be said that to "cre-

ate" is related to issues that go beyond the scope of movements and gestures: events, subjectivities, compositional modes, desires, worlds, and ways to exist and re-exist are created. According to Moehlecke and Fonseca, we can conceive of "dance as a mode of subjectivization oriented to a permanent movement, since it shows us a possible micropolitical form to exist in multiple ways" (Moehlecke and Fonseca, 2005, p. 3).

Following this line of thinking, we also consider what Bourriaud (2011) calls the "life device that artistic practice represents" (p. 43). According to Bourriaud, modern art relativizes the art object in the creative process, establishing more and more similarities between artistic strategies and everyday life. In this context artistic processes are focused on the idea of the "experience of the 'invention of self'" (idem) and the work of modern art begins to present itself as a reality to be lived and experienced. Similarly, one can say that we found in contemporary artistic practices that same dimension of the creative process as a work on oneself, in contexts where such processes can be constituted as ways of life, as the possibility of creating and recreating self.

According to Sílvia Fernandes, there is a tendency in contemporary performing arts to refuse the idea of a finished work, valuing the unstable nature of the process as an experience in direct confrontation with the real, or with the social realities of the other, encompassing, as well, questions regarding the "territories of otherness and social exclusion in the country" (Fernandes, 2013, p. 06). Seen thusly, the process of creation becomes conceived of as the work itself. Along these lines, the author cites Rancière (2005) and Conargo (2008), drawing attention to what can be termed the relational ethics of artistic production, in which the notion of the artist himself is seen as a relational being, necessarily implicated in composing and giving evidence to the "landscapes of the visible" (Rancière, 2005 cited in Fernandes, 2013, p. 7).

Moreover, according to Ileana Dieguez (2011, p. 181 cited in Fernandes, 2013, p. 11), this replacement of the issues that mobilize creativity in the context of performing arts would be a way of "making absent bodies visible," not inserted or not represented, but rather configuring another form of openness to differences (idem). Also according to Dieguez (2014), one can consider the scope of theatricality as a strategy that runs through the theater and transcends it, expanding

and shifting the boundaries of the theatrical and the artistic, transiting through the territories of life and art.

In the author's words:

During the twentieth century, art increasingly experimented with hybridizations and impurities, so that what was initially suggested as "other theater" is, in reality, recognizing the theatrical as an expanded field. As has already been legitimized or polemicized, theatricality has become one of the most relevant characteristics of contemporary art. Against all possibility of purity, [against] an essentiality that purifies and radically separates the various art forms, art is recognized today as an "event structure," of situations, practices in situ, the theatrics of performativities and (re)presentations (Dieguez, 2014, p .128).

Thus, to create becomes a need for experience oneself in order to open to the other. But we must understand that this openness to relational ethics is not only the simple task of composing visible landscapes, but mainly lies in realizing a positive potentialization of this composition, i.e., relational ethics and the experience of self only makes sense if effecting not only the ability to carry out whatever relationship, but also promote a poetic qualitative expansion of the force of the relationship.

One creates, therefore, from the confrontations with life's limitations, the clashes with the insistent experience of undoing, the confrontations with the urgency to become what we are. One creates to re-exist, compose other ways of living, to gain the body and language to inhabit other sensations of the world. To leave the everyday to reach other levels of relations with the world, giving way to other forms/body where one can perhaps think with the body. To make the body a poetry machine of becoming possible (Deleuze, 1992).

To the extent that we corporally strip ourselves of some commonplace assumptions, we allow immersion in a creative process in which the work and the creation merge, both of which are endorsed by intensive fields of lived experiences. Such experiences are connected to a doing that aims to activate the plane of the senses as a guide to practice and sharing.

According to Miller, dance can be a device for this immersion in that it disposes the body to invest in its potential creative power, wherein corporal experience anchors itself around the process of corporal movement.

The dancing body allows sensitivity to its entire range of possibilities of sensations and varied reverberations of images and meanings. These perceptions are incorporated by the artist in creating and scenic action through their lived experiences - as moving tattoos revealing that the body is clothed in their vestiges (Miller, 2012, p.118).

In this territory, the experience of the body itself can emerge as a process of transformation, as a process of subjectivization anchored in a corporal sense of the experience of movement. The body awakened and invited to move according to corporal sensitivity.

Considerations regarding a certain going mad

There is a certain specificity of the experience of madness, important to our investigative field, precisely for one of the points that makes it unique: the experience of corporal deconstruction. Immersed in the realm of "madness," we find bodies fragmented by having lived disjointed fluxes and divisive intensities, often with distanced affects. Forgotten in their daydreams. Bodies with language and expression restricted by intense immersion in chaos (Deleuze and Guattari, 1996).

Pelbart locates us in this sphere:

There is in madness a suffering that is of the order of disembodiment, atemporality, of an empty eternity, of ahistoricity, of an existence without concreteness (or an excess of the concrete), without beginning or end, with that terrible sorrow of not feeling sorrow, the larger grief of having purged becoming and being condemned to testify in silent envy another's incarnation (Pelbart, 1993, p.20).

It would be then in that emptiness of the "mad" disembodied that one can try to create, with the experience of dance, the ability to embody processes for the recovery of other territories with each dawn (Deleuze and Guattari, 1996), provoking destabilization (or stabilizations) or creating conditions for something to happen outside of known registers. Creating beyond the scenic and spectacular perspective, within the subtle things, conditions for something to flourish, conditions for the transformation of self and the other at each encounter. This is one of our pur-

poses.

In that sense that we invest in the “dance” as artistic and clinical intervention in an institution such as CAPS, the domains of what we create can become comingled. Dancers, ‘patients’ and therapists can create together textures that imprint on each landscape-body another way to feel, to inhabit and to tell their own stories. Another way to talk about themselves and perhaps take care of themselves.

It can be said that “production” in this practice occurs in the subtleties, in expanding the look, perception, sensations, and will. Engendering processes that do not necessarily come to an end when the dance workshop is over.⁴

That being the case, it’s like sounding out strategies of re-existence and composition that we have addressed in the intersection between dance and clinical psychology as a possible experience for creating events (Rolnik, 2005). Dance approaches clinical practice to the extent that it can be a device to construct singular bodies, bodies that do not speak about themselves but that reinvent themselves in unthinkable ways. Strategies that allow to “replant” subjectivity, providing multiple ways of living creative and articulate ways of life in time/social space.

In dance as approached by José Gil, we have the notion of moving (dance) as the creation of composite atmospheres of small perceptions, which are corporally captured in the most unconsciously conscious manner possible (Gil, 2005), producing another body awareness. Thus, with the introduction of other languages (dance), we try to disrupt known motor codes to activate the liberation of affects in a floating state that spreads through corporal awareness.

That’s where we founded our idea that dance can be a conduit to other existential territories, exercised along with clinical practice, producing questions that we hold dear. What other encounter qualities can be established with the affirmation of a field of microperceptions? What other possibilities of movement through the world, communicative mobility and choices can emerge from these encounters?

⁴ This workshop takes place weekly as one of the activities offered to any user of this service, lasting 1hour and 30min, and has as its sole criterion for inclusion the spontaneous desire to participate. The practice is developed by the co-author of this article, and counts with the participation of some professional and/or CAPS trainees as assistant work facilitators. It is also important to note that this research was started in 2009 when another version of this workshop was developed in the same CAPS, which became the research object of her Masters thesis entitled *Corpo Fronteira: clínica dança, loucura. Uma experiência* (Body Border: Dance Clinical, Madness. An experience: available at: <http://www.bibliotecadigital.unicamp.br/document/?code=000934579&opt=4>), conceived of as a way of deepening the practice, with greater focus on the creation of dance procedures employed as facilitators for these encounters.

The clues to these questions present themselves as subtle marks that result from giving oneself to the process, of care in how it is conducted and a work ethic that is also a life ethic, in the sense of creation and expression of a mode of existence, or a lifestyle. According to Deleuze (1992), ethics for Foucault are constituted from an opposition to the moral:

The difference is this: the moral is presented as a set of coercive rules of a special kind, that consists of judging actions and intentions referring to them in transcendent values (right, wrong ...); ethics is a set of voluntary rules that evaluate what we do, what we say, in function of the mode of existence that they entail. We say this, do that: which mode of existence does that imply? [...] Sometimes just a gesture or a word. They are lifestyles, always implied in how we are constituted in one way or another (Deleuze, 1992, p. 125-126).

From this perspective, we propose to give visibility to dance creation strategies in the interest of creating interferences between the two practices (dance and clinical), outlining procedures and states of this intercrossing as contagion zones in which experiences of presence are established, other modes of composing encounters in life, other ways of thinking and feeling the body involved in singular processes of differentiation. In the words of Deleuze:

[...] The relationship established between the terms that intercede is one of interference, intervention through the destabilizing traversing of any domain (disciplinary, conceptual, artistic, socio-political, etc.) on another. [...] The relation of intercession is a relationship of perturbation, and not of content exchange. It embarks on the wave, or takes advantage of the power to differentiate from the other to express its own difference (Deleuze, 1992, p. 153).

To this end, we have adopted, as practical assumptions, some procedures from the Klaus Vianna Dance technique.⁵ Starting from premises of a personal dance, based on the awareness of movement and body sense, we seek to devise procedures that address the physical needs of the CAPS goers, who are mostly eccen-

⁵ The Klaus Vianna Technique is based on systematic procedures and practices mainly developed by dancer and teacher Klaus Vianna and his son Rainer Vianna. It is, in short, a technique that provides for the study and awareness of movement from the improvisation and danced movement. It should be noted that such references were lived and thought in the perspective of the dancer and researcher Jussara Miller, who was principally responsible for systematizing the Klaus Vianna Technique with Rainer Vianna, and with whom the co-author of this text has trained since 2012.

tric, marginal, despised, forgotten and even repudiated. Poor, strange, absent and often overlooked in their capacity for action. We speak of bodies and corporalities of diverse colors, rhythms, tempos, language, expectations, mobility and immobility. Bodies with affective resources and distinct materialities. Bodies with a humanity flung more widely open, that summon, before any technical resource, the observation and careful listening to what jumps out as uniqueness and variation. Frightening bodies that make explicit what makes us more profoundly human: our differences.

So we need to listen keenly to see the clinical practice and a dance unique to each body composition for which we seek to invent devices that put in motion other life opportunities present in each composition-body. Seeking to deconstruct habitual movement in its deepest root: the everyday gestures, posture, walking, breathing and pause.

Such deconstruction takes place from minimal actions and movements, recognizing the singular body as a place of expression that resists the anesthetizing effect of daily tasks when you connect to listening to your feelings, perceptions, affects and needs. This is the point from which we start, emphasizing once again research for a singular dance, the one contained in the gestures of each day as the amplified movements a scenic action, trying to bring some proportions of listening to the corporal quotidian, and from this attentive activity, perhaps to re-create the space/time in which we operate.

Conclusions

When we suggest the interference between dance and the clinical as a potential to create other compositional states, we do not do so in the sense of constructing a "form" or "model" to produce an open body or an ideal type of intervention. What we hope in this practice is to generate creative flows that can create subjective territories to support the day-to-day variabilities and increase the possibilities of exchanges and affects.

Thus, this entry, or mode, is approaching the body by putting its corporal states as references for dealing with everyday situations, conceiving it as process as well, as

an unfinished work that engenders (always) transitional forms of existence. In this context, dance procedures are used as a means and not an end (Miller, 2012) and allow us to experience, in the body, states of openness and composition, taking as its premise the construction of relational spaces that allow one to experience movement from a sensitive listening to difference, following its variations and deviations.

From this practice, in which we propose to inhabit a frontier to build other relational modes, it can be said that the augmentative encounters win out when the experience opens transient paths to break automatic and habitual rhythms. When other repertoires of movement and existential forms come about, even when they cannot be named or shared, as worlds that open in silence. In that corporal invisible that inhabits us and transforms us.

... A possibility of life is evaluated in itself, by the movements it traces and the intensities that it creates ... (Deleuze and Guattari, 1992, p. 98).

References

- BOURRIAUD, N. *Formas de vida: a arte moderna e a invenção de si*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2011.
- DELEUZE, G. *Conversações*. Trad. Peter Pál Pelbart. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1992.
- DELEUZE, G. & PARNET, C. *Diálogos*. São Paulo: Editora Escuta, 1998.
- DELEUZE, G e GUATARI, F. *Mil Platôs: Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia*. Vol. 3. [Trad.] Aurélio Guerra Neto, Ana Lucia de Oliveira, Lúcia Cláudia Leão e Suely Rolnik. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1996.
- DELEUZE, G. GUATTARI, F. *O que é Filosofia?* Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1992.
- DIÉGUEZ, L. Cenários expandidos. (Re)presentações, teatralidades e performatividades. *Revista Urdimento*, Florianópolis, v.15, p. 135-147, 2011.
- DIÉGUEZ, L. Um teatro sem teatro: a teatralidade como campo expandido. *Revista Sala Preta*, Sao Paulo, V.14, n.01, 2014.

FERNANDES, S. Experiências do real no teatro. *Revista Sala Preta*, São Paulo, V.13, n.2, 2013.

FERRACINI, R. *Ensaio de atuação*. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 2013.

FERRACINI, F & RABELO, A. F. Recriar Sempre. *Art Research Journal*, Rio de Janeiro, V.1, n.2, 2014.

FOUCAULT, M. Tecnologias de si. *Revista Verve*, São Paulo, n.6, p. 321-360, 2004.

GIL, J. *A Imagem-Nua e as Pequenas Percepções*. Lisboa: Relógio D'Água Editora, 2005.

MILLER, J. *Qual é o corpo que dança?* Dança e educação somática para adultos e crianças. São Paulo: Summus editorial, 2012.

MOEHLECKE, V. & FONSECA, T. M. Da dança e do Devir: a dança no regime do sutil. *Revista do Departamento de Psicologia, UFF, Niterói*, v.17, n.1, jan./jun. 2005.

PASSOS, E. Os dispositivos clínico-políticos e as redes no contemporâneo. *EntreLinhas do Conselho Regional de Psicologia CRP-07, Porto Alegre*, p. 8-9, Ano 2000.

PELBART, P. P. *A Nau do Tempo Rei: 7 Ensaio sobre o Tempo da Loucura*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1993.

QUILICI, C. S. Campo Expandido: Arte como ato Filosófico. *Revista Sala Preta*, São Paulo, v.14, n. 2, 2014.

ROLNIK, S. Uma terapêutica para tempos desprovidos de poesia. Catálogo da exposição Ligia Clark: da obra ao acontecimento. Somos o molde a você cabe o sopro. Curadoria de Suely Rolnik e Corinne Diserens, pelo Musée de Beaux – Arts de Nantes, França (08 out. - 31 dez. 2005), e Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brasil (25 jan. - 26 mar. 2006).

