

I International Dance Film Festival

Alacant. 26th, 27th and 28th September, 2014

Body, Dance and Spatialization. Ten Theses on a Phenomenological Approach to the Corporeality of Dance and its Forms of Representation¹.

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Body, Dance and Spatialization. Ten Theses on a Phenomenological Approach to the Corporeality of Dance and its Forms of Representation.

Abstract: This communication tries to synthesize ten major theses that explain the multiple levels of experience upon the body. The origin of these considerations is fundamentally philosophical and their consequences affect both the general space of the arts as well as the statute of philosophy itself. Phenomenology represents the main theoretical frame of reference. Our ten proposals aim to be a practical resource to unfold a thorough reflection on thought and extension, on the lived body, spatiality and spatialization. Art in general naturally exhibits the dynamisms that constitute subjectivity and sense. Architecture and dance have made the effectiveness of the aesthetic experience overly lucid, calling into question our understanding of the nature of subjectivity. The main reason for a theoretical architectonic extension is to relocate the different levels of analysis and the phenomena that are displayed within them. Since Book VII of the *Republic*, dance constitutes an experience which recreates the phenomenological process either as enjoyment, investment, or subversion. Some of the questions unfolded here will be the concepts of distinction, separation, distance, interiority and exteriority, the experience of the body as *Leib* and the body as *Körper* and the levels of spatiality, and the different representations of artistic practice will be added. The phenomenological distinction between *Phantasia* and Imagination will be key to understand the experience of dance in contemporary cinema.

Key words: Body, spatiality, spatialization, phenomenon, subjectivity, sense, perception, imagination, *Phantasia*.

Thesis 1.

[Reduction]

Both art and philosophy come from reduction (*anabasis*), and in the two reductions, aesthetic and phenomenological, the obstacles that are to be overcome are equivalent. In both cases it is necessary to break first the eidetic barrier, the positional barrier later and finally the barrier of the identity (symbolic structure).

This is the main thesis in which all the theoretical expositions converge². The Art-Philosophy relations have been historically analyzed from the common nexus of parallelism between their reductions³. Both the classical considerations as well as the expositions of modernity and of the contemporary aesthetic theory have merged in this question⁴. A certain negativity⁵, identified in an idealistic context, was interpreted since antiquity as a movement of *anabasis* that brings us close to the phenomenon in its process of phenomenalisation, to its genesis, to the world in its continuous origin and to the materiality of things itself⁶. To hypostatize the name of art or to solidify the movement of the ideas has broken the bridges over reality⁷. Consequently, this movement of parallel reduction has been interpreted in both cases as a form of diversion, inversion and subversion.

Both reductions, the phenomenological and the aesthetic, spring from the same layer: objectivity⁸. In both cases the starting point is the perceived objects⁹, the movements, the

² Husserl, E. *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926-1935)*. Edited by Sebastian Luft, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2002. French translation: *De la réduction phénoménologique. Textes posthumes (1926-1935)*, Ed. J. Millon, Grenoble, 2007.

³ Sánchez Ortiz de Urbina, R. *Estromatología. Teoría de los niveles fenomenológicos*, Editorial Brumaria, Madrid, 2014.

⁴ Álvarez Falcón, L. *Realidad, arte y conocimiento. La deriva estética tras el pensamiento contemporáneo*, Editorial Horsori, Barcelona, 2009.

⁵ Adorno, T. W. *Ästhetische Theorie*, en *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, Frankfurt am Main, 1970. Spanish translation: *Teoría Estética*, Taurus ediciones, Barcelona, 1971.

⁶ Sánchez Ortiz de Urbina, R. «Estética y Fenomenología», in *Historia de las ideas estéticas y de las teorías artísticas contemporáneas*, Valeriano Bozal (ed.), Antonio Machado Libros, Madrid, 2002.

⁷ Heidegger, M. «El origen de la obra de arte (1935/36)», in *Caminos de Bosque*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2003.

⁸ Álvarez Falcón, L. (ed.), *La Sombra de lo Invisible. Merleau-Ponty 1961-2011*, Ed. Eutelequia, Madrid, 2011.

constructs recognisable by means of identification synthesis. Such syntheses are oriented and animated by meanings, in a level of stability and intersubjective determination¹⁰. Both reductions lead us to a level in which no significativity can direct an intentionality, only pretensions of the senses, with senses becoming done and undone, accompanied by appearances of completely vague sensations in permanent contact with pure materiality¹¹.

Thesis 2.

[Spatiality]

After the aesthetic and phenomenological reduction, both the experience of spatiality and the experience of temporality are stratified and the phenomena are exhibited in different architectonic levels. The becoming of space, the topological space where the boundaries of interiority and exteriority are defined, and the objective spatiality, the space of dots and distances, all unfold in conjunction with the experience of time: temporalization, the continuous present and the objective time.

The second thesis affects the conjugation and the mutual resolution of time and space¹². The fusion of temporality and spatiality that is conspicuously exhibited in the experience of the arts¹³, particularly in music and dance, unfolds in a level of subjectivity oblivious to the topological space and the chronological time¹⁴. The enigma of the “becoming” of space¹⁵

⁹ Husserl, E. *Das Perzeptionale*, Husserliana, Volumen XXXVIII, 2004, pp 232-270.

¹⁰ Husserl, E. *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre*. Sommersemester 1908. Edited by Ursula Panzer. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987; *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil. 1905-1920. Zweiter Teil. 1921-28. Dritter Teil. 1929-35. Edited by Iso Kern. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands, 1973.

¹¹ San Martín, J. *La reducción fenomenológica, Introducción a la fenomenología de Husserl*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, 1973.

¹² Husserl, E. *Die 'Bernauer Manuskripte' über das Zeitbewußtsein (1917/18)* Edited by Rudolf Bernet & Dieter Lohmar. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001.

¹³ Maldiney, H. *L'art, l'éclair de l'être*, Collection Scalène, Éditions CompAct, Paris 1993.

¹⁴ Heidegger, M. *Bemerkungen zu Kunst-Plastik-Raum. Die Kunst und der Raum. Observaciones relativas al arte-la plástica-el espacio. El arte y el espacio. Oharkizunak arteari, plastikari eta espazioari buruz. Artea eta espazioa*. Edición trilingüe alemán-castellano-euskera, Cuadernos de la Cátedra Jorge Oteiza, Universidad Pública de Navarra, Pamplona, 2003.

and time extends to the “becoming” of an inconsistent subjectivity¹⁶. The aesthetic experience and the phenomenological reduction stop and suspend the continuity of the natural world¹⁷, Naturalism, showing the radical misalignment of time and space around the lived body¹⁸.

Thesis 3

[Corporeity]

The becoming of space and the becoming of time correspond with the unfolding of a no constituent subjectivity that is still not egoic, and of syntheses that still lack identity. Subjectivity must be corporeal so that the waves of sensitive fields can be distributed in kinesthetic movements, grouped in subjective kinesthetic systems, associated in reciprocal dependency with aesthetic syntheses. Sensations change from kinesthetic movements.

The third thesis is a direct consequence of the previous one. At this level of reduction, aesthetics and phenomenology, the necessary connection between a subjectivity still in formation and some released sensations, sensitive fields adrift, demands a radical solution: subjectivity is corporeal¹⁹. The body becomes a cell which cannot be located and the zero

¹⁵ Lavigne, J.F. «Espace ou pensée? L'origine transcendente de la spacialité chez Husserl», en *Epoché*, n° 4, 1994.

¹⁶ Husserl, E. *Ding und Raum, Vorlesungen 1907*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1973. French translation: *Chose et espace. Leçons de 1907*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1989.

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, M. «Le doute de Cézanne», en *Fontaine*, n° 8, 1945, pp. 80-100. *Sens et non-sens*. Nagel, Paris, 1948, pp. 15-44; Gallimard, Paris, 1996, pp. 13-33 ; *L'Oeil et l'Esprit*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1964.

¹⁸ Husserl, E. *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*. Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1980. French translation: *Leçons pour une phénoménologie de la conscience intime du temps*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1964. Spanish translation: *Lecciones de fenomenología de la conciencia interna del tiempo*, trans. Agustín Serrano de Haro, Editorial Trotta, Madrid 2002.

¹⁹ Husserl, E. *Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre in der gewöhnlichen weltanschaulichen Interpretation. Die Ur-Arche Erde bewegt sich nicht. Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum phänomenologischen Ursprung der Körperlichkeit der Räumlichkeit der Natur in ersten naturwissenschaftlichen Sinne. Alles notwendige Anfangsuntersuchungen*, Texto D 17 (1934). En Marvin Farber (ed.), *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1940; pp. 307-325. Traducción francesa: *L'arche-originale Terre ne se meut pas. Recherches fondamentales sur l'origine phénoménologique de la spatialité de la nature*, trad. D. Franck, en *La Terre ne se meut pas*, Minuit, Paris 1989. Spanish translation: *La Tierra no se mueve*, trans. Agustín Serrano de Haro, Facultad de Filosofía, Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 1995.

point of spacialization²⁰. The kinesthetic movements of a corporeal subjectivity start to match the necessary schematic sensations in search for a meaning²¹.

Thesis 4.

[Leib-Körper]

After both reductions –aesthetic and phenomenological– subjectivity is exhibited or displayed in different architectonic levels, delimited by the transit of active syntheses towards pure passivity. As both reductions advance (anabasis), significant reductions of the subject's operations take place. Subjectivity is reduced in itself: direction, location and interiority. Temporality and spatiality are affected by the experience of the internal body (Leib) and by the objective and positional evidence of the external body (Körper).

The three former theses draw a radical distinction between the *Leib* (internal body) and the *Körper* (external body)²², a distinction which has been widely analysed by the contemporary thought. The lived body is not a substantial subjectivity, but the anonymous holder towards whom the perspectives of the landscape are directed. Phenomenology will make the lived or phenomenic body (*Leib*) a central subject when distinguishing it from the *Körper* or objective body. Such distinction is not a question of ontological dualism. The body is what guides each being in the world, its space-time absolute-zero point. Perceptive acts are always corporal, but they do not constitute the body as such. The body is intentionally formed by a complex reflective relationship that it maintains with itself when it perceives by means of one of its organs other than others are in action. The body is lived reflectively. If the body-object is the holder of automatic physiological processes and the base of all our

²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Éditions Gallimard. Paris, 1945. Traducción española: *Fenomenología de la percepción*, Ediciones Península, Barcelona, 2000; *Le visible et l'invisible*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1964.

²¹ Garelli, J. *Rythmes et mondes*, J. Millon, Grenoble, 1991.

²² For a more thorough understanding of the concept of body in Husserl, it is advisable to read the chapter by San Martín, J. J. «Apuntes para una teoría fenomenológica del cuerpo», en Rivera de Rosales, J., y López Saenz, M^a C., *El cuerpo. Perspectivas filosóficas*. UNED, Madrid, 2002, pp. 133-164.

activities, the phenomenic body is the expression and accomplishment of the our intentions, projects and desires²³.

Thesis 5.

[Direction]

As compared to the metric space –with dots and distances, linked with the time continuous of presents– it appears the spatiality of direction, which mediates between spatialization, the becoming of space, and the metric space between distances of intersubjective operations. In this spatiality of direction, and with no need to be anchored to fixed distances, interiority manifests in front of Cartesian exteriority. This space has been called place or space of situation (*sinere*), with its two basic functions: direction and exteriorisation.

After the aesthetic and phenomenological reduction exposed in the first three theses, the suspension and investment of the natural thing has broken the apparent continuity of the movement of nature²⁴, dividing spatiality into spatiality of direction and metric spatiality²⁵. Topological spatiality mediates between spatialization and the objective space, becoming a direction space, without coordinates; a space of places, without distances; a space as an opening to interiority facing the exteriority of the world²⁶. There is no distance from a privileged position, but privileged directions from an orientation centre²⁷. Such centre of direction is a *topos*, a place that allows us to interminably explore the axes of direction of the body.

²³ Merleau-Ponty, M., *Résumés de cours, Collège de France 1952-1960*. Gallimard, Paris, 1968

²⁴ Merleau-Ponty, M., *La Nature. Notes du Cours du Collège de France*. Seuil, Paris, 1995; *L'institution. La passivité. Notes de cours au Collège de France (1954-1955)*. Belin, Paris, 2003

²⁵ Richir, M. *Fragments phénoménologiques sur le temps et l'espace*, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble 2006.

²⁶ Straus, E. *Vom Sinn der Sinne. Ein Beitrag zur Grundlegung der Psychologie*, J. Springer, Berlin, 1935. French translation: *Du sens des sens. Contribution à l'étude des fondements de la psychologie*. Ed. J. Millon, Grenoble, 2000.

²⁷ Husserl, E. *Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur*. In Marvin Farber (ed.), *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1940, pp. 307-325.

Thesis 6.

[Kinesthetic freedom]

Topological spatiality of orientation is a space with places but without distances, in which the ego is the direction centre that establishes what is inner and what is outer. Kinesthetic freedom is that original spatiality where the corporeal v system is freely linking or adhering to a field of sensations in search of an optimum.

The purely material impressions and the felt sensations are becoming adjusted in the spatiality of orientation described in the previous thesis²⁸. Instead of an absolute centre of coordinates, we have a direction centre²⁹. The body is displayed as a cell of spatialization, and prior to the measurable space according to exact dimensions, the place and the privileged directions of action occur: approach-distance, right-left, up-down. Such display provides the freedom to spontaneously cross the space of direction without determining if the directions are correct or not³⁰.

Thesis 7

[Location]

The representation of the body in its constant exploration of the direction space is expressed by the artistic practice. The dance exhibits the becoming of the corporeal singulars and the becoming of the sensorial paths that are integrated, in mutual correspondence, with the becoming of spatiality and temporality. In that “blind” exploration the living body becomes a place-ground, a place-home, oblivious to the temporary and spatial position of the Earth

²⁸ Husserl, E. *Phänomenologische Psychologie*. Vorlesungen Sommersemester. 1925. Edited by Walter Biemel. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968. Hua IX, 7.

²⁹ Husserl, E. *Notizen zur Raumkonstitution*, Ms. D 18, published in 1940 by A. Schütz. See French translation in E. Husserl, *La terre ne se meut pas*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1989.

³⁰ Husserl, E. *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929-1934). Die C-Manuskripte, Husserliana –Materialien VIII*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.

as a system of places. The body turns out to be an absolute *here* kinesthetically impelled to a vast horizon interminably open.

The free exploration of the direction space which we have described in the last two theses necessarily entails the phenomenological approach to the living body (*Leib*) as location space³¹. In that case there are distances from a privileged centre, but privileged addresses from a direction centre whose absolute *here* is a *topos*, a place (direction, location and interiority). The axes of direction of the body are previous to the Cartesian axes of spatiality of the following level and away from Earth as a system of places³². Nevertheless, when identifying the body through perceptive fantasy (*Phantasia*), neither the temporary place nor the spatial one are perceivable. Therefore, the kinesthetic space in which the body moves is a system of possible kinesthetic places inasmuch as halting points, beginnings and endings of tranquility of continuous kinesthetic actions. Such possibility is the necessary condition so that the dance³³, in its interminable search for direction and location, appears as an art experience.

Thesis 8

[Interiority]

The interiority-exteriority of the space of distances and the interiority-exteriority of the space of places mingle in the artistic experience of the dance. The absolute *here* of the lived body (*Leib*), a privileged place of direction, necessarily entails the experience of the interiority as an unmovable limit.

³¹ Heidegger, M. «Construir, habitar, pensar», in *Conferencias y artículos*, translation by Eustaquio Barjau, Ed. Del Serbal, Barcelona, 1994.

³² Álvarez Falcón, L. «El lugar en el espacio. Fenomenología y Arquitectura», en *Fedro, Revista de estética y teoría de las artes*, nº 13, Universidad de Sevilla, 2014.

³³ Forti, S. *Handbook in Motion*. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, 1974.

As it has been described in the previous theses, the original spatiality in which the experience of the body in the dance, its direction and its location is exhibited, unavoidably demands to approach the interiority as a third characteristic of this space of intermediation³⁴. As the *Leib* is not a body, the Aristotelian notion of place as the immediate unmovable limit of a physical entity is broken, and the *Leib* as place *overflows* the body to encounter other absolute *heres* as analogous places. The absolute *here* of the body in the dance is, paradoxically, an outer “interior”³⁵. The interiority of this *Leib* is nothing but its place, the unmovable limit –albeit impossible to locate in space– that surrounds the *Leibkörper*.

Thesis 9

[Phantasia-Imagination]

If dance is to replace the objective by the imaginary thing, there is no possibility of any artistic or aesthetic experience. The imagination also has an objective contexture, although it may not be effective; it remains in the area of the intentionally objective issue. The artistic experience of dance must unblock the imaginary effect –that can occur secondarily– which implies the passage to fantasy, nothing to do with imagination. Consequently, the imagination does not decisively take part in the artistic experience of the filmic reproduction of the dance; however, it attempts to explore the space of direction of the dance itself represented through another artistic construction and through another artifact.

This thesis constitutes one of the foundations of the phenomenological approach to the aesthetic contemporary theory³⁶. It allows us to understand the nature of the artistic experience from the conjugated oscillation artifact-work of art and the phenomenological

³⁴ Sánchez Ortiz de Urbina, R. «L’obscurité de l’expérience esthétique», en *Annales de phénoménologie*, 2011, pp. 7-32.

³⁵ Halprin, A. *Moving Toward Life*. University of Press of New England, London, 1995.

³⁶ Husserl, E. «Phénoménologie de la conscience esthétique», en *Revue D’Esthétique*, n. 36, Jean-Michel Place, Paris, 1999.

distinction Phantasia-Imagination³⁷. In the case of dance in films, we react to the projection in the same way as we react in front of the landscape that holds up the picture, in front of the somersaults that an acrobat performs or in front of the image of the vertiginous descend of a roller coaster: with all muscles of the body, from head to toes. Our eyesight has lost its privilege when creating a mirage. In front of a fascinating fiction, it is not eye but the whole body that is deceived³⁸. In the realm of *Phantasia* there are no objective syntheses which correlate with operations³⁹, neither continuous time is centered in a present, nor is the geometric space with its points and dimensions, and there are no meanings that guide the intention⁴⁰. As in any art experience, the presentation of dance through film mobilizes our body and forces us to strive to perceive a reality that is no longer objective, that cannot be perceived through imagination nor through objective perception. Our body follows the possible kinesthetic places with its muscular and affective movements, incapable of finding a position of pre-assigned vision, because it just does not exist⁴¹.

Thesis 10

[Spatialization of time]

Two different artistic constructions intercross and overlap in the artistic experience of dance in film. The first affects the experience of the representation of the body in its constant exploration of space. The second concerns the modulation of temporality expressed by the cinema experience.

³⁷ Husserl, E. *Phantasie; Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung*. Husserliana XXIII. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht-Boston-London 1980. French translation: *Phantasia, conscience d'image, souvenir*. Trans. Raymond Kassis and Jean-François Pestureau, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble, 2002.

³⁸ Halprin, A. *Mouvements de vie*, Ed. Contredanse, Bruxelles, 2009.

³⁹ Richir, M. *Phantasia, imagination, affectivité. Phénoménologie et anthropologie phénoménologique*, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble, 2004.

⁴⁰ Husserl, E. *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*. M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1966. French translation: *De la synthèse passive*. Trans. B. Bégout and J. Kessler with the support of Natalie Depraz and Marc Richir, Ed. Jérôme Millon, Grenoble, 1998.

⁴¹ Janice, R. Halprin, A. *Experience as Dance*. University of California, Berkeley, CA, 2009.

Consequently, in the experience of dance in film, art takes us to the limit –to the *limes*– when the identity vanishes and what is at stake is the sense of its own becoming: the sense of the human⁴². We are made to endlessly constitute an original spatiality by starting up kinesthesias in the body of the receiver, who must then follow the projection as if following a melody. The film is now a practical space⁴³ that virtually recreates the connections of the corporeal kinesthetic system with a field of sensations, in search of a necessary –though always futile– stability.

In the middle of this phenomenological process in motion, the experience of dance in film exhibits some spaced temporality, spatialized, discontinuous, in which there is neither present, nor continuity, nor simultaneity⁴⁴. It is some flexible temporality, mere successivity, spaced and rythmical, without the regularity of continuous time⁴⁵. The present extends its presence, maintaining what it already anticipates and still preserving what has happened. That temporalized spatiality –without distances– that in the dance defines a situation and a place through the body, now merges with the spaced temporality –without presents– of the cinema as a radical and critical form of representation.

⁴² Maldiney, H. *Regard, Parole, Espace, L'Âge d'homme*, Paris, 1973.

⁴³ Sánchez, J. A. (Ed.). «Cuerpo y cinematografía», en *Cairon 11, Revista de estudios de danza*, 2008

⁴⁴ Richir, M. *Synthèse passive et temporalisation/spatialisation*, in Husserl. Collectif sous la direction de Eliane Escoubas et Marc Richir, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble 1989.

⁴⁵ Richir, M. *Phénoménologie en esquisses. Nouvelles fondations*, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble, 2000.