

Towards a Framework of a Semiotics of Dance

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Nicoleta Popa Blanariu,
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Abstract: In her article "Towards a Framework of a Semiotics of Dance" Nicoleta Popa Blanariu constructs a framework of based on de Saussure's, Peirce's, and Barthes's thought. She applies Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of semiosis defined as a cultural system of conventions. In dance this occurs when choreographic signs are encoded, for example in magic, ritual, or religious expressions of movement. Further, Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of the role of "intelligent consciousness" is crucial for the engendering of signification and thus to dance. In dance, the choreographer "interprets" the world and by means of selection and interpretation, the choreographic sign reveals its object and this process is related to abstraction. In semiosis dance involves a process of "culturalization" (Barthes), whereby codes of dance represent the spontaneity of "natural" of movements and feelings within a repeatable system of expression. Last but not least, Edmund Husserl's notion that dance belongs to the domain of "pre-reflexivity" of signal and entails symbolic qualities derived from its embedding of cultural codes is employed by Popa Blanariu in her building a framework of the semiotics of dance.

Nicoleta POPA BLANARIU

Towards a Framework of a Semiotics of Dance

Dance has often been associated with the domain of "pre-reflective" experience with "the immediacy of being-in-the-world" as Edmund Husserl and the phenomenologists say (see, e.g., Durand; Fraleigh). Certainly, dance is a composite of signal and symptom, but it acquires simultaneously symbolic features, the latter derived from its location in socio-cultural codes. Dance particularly reveals a process which is specific to semiosis — the "culturalization" of the natural (Barthes qtd. in Greimas and Courtès 240) — and an inextricable relationship between "natural" and "cultural" in human behavior (Merleau-Ponty 299). There seems to be certain basic motifs of human dance such as moving in circles and ellipsis, jumping and stepping to and fro, as well as rhythmical foot beats, and even "dressing up" for dance inherited from primate behavior (see Sachs 11). Group dances such as "rain dances" (Van Lawick-Goodall 54) or warrior dances (Sachs 10) may hold similarities with nuptial parades in various species. But the main difference between these "performances" and choreographic expression lies within its intentional value and culturally codified behavior.

Body movements can exteriorize involuntarily and unconscious processes and many contemporary choreographers, like their forerunner Isadora Duncan, look for the first code of gestures or "first movement" prior to the aesthetic codification of kinesics (see, e.g., Magriel). The process of the aesthetic use of common gestures can be described in terms of the phaneroscopic categories theorized by Charles Sanders Peirce, so that primary emotionality (firstness), related to the category of pre-conscious or unconscious feeling, can be exteriorized by way of spontaneous, (quasi-)involuntary gestures (secondness or factual action). Involuntary gestures are subsumed to the index and the symptom which, although lacking in intentional action, can signify. Kinetic manifestations acquire a symbolic character (thirdness) as a kind of mediating thought, conscience, law and that includes various codes such as choreographic ones (see Peirce 244-45). Although conventionalized, the structures of the dance symbolic retain the evoking potential and the motivated character of the index and icon. The "translucence" of choreographic symbols results from this hybrid nature (see Bouvet 91).

The tradition of ballet has preserved and cultivated a number of essential forms of movement, which can be considered "symbolical" actions (Laban 123), such as arabesques. (Re)semantized in aesthetic codes, fundamental positions of the type possession/repulsion (that is, at the level of minimal visual figures, focusing/dispersion) can also be found in dance. In classical ballet they persist in the opposition between arabesque/attitude, i.e., direct form/flexible form (Laban 124). In ballet, a choreographic symbol does not signify anything definite, but it arouses a great variety of images for the spectator (Laban 124). The "translucence" of the choreographic symbol is owing to its evocative energy (as a particular form of motivation). For instance, in Indian classical dance there are more than four hundred *mudras* (gestural signs) which reveal actions, feelings, and relationships. As they belong to an ancient cultural heritage, the signification of these *mudras* has remained accessible to the Indian public. In this case, dance signifies on the basis of a code in the strong sense of the word: a collection of symbols: a connection established by virtue of the semiotic convention of a *socius*, between some contents and their suitable expressions. Indian classical dance narrates in a code which is alternative to the verbal one, the traditional history of gods. At the other pole, from an Occidental perspective, George Balanchine, the maestro of "abstract" ballet, considered that dance, as contrary to theater, cannot communicate complex plots or character relationships.

With regard to the history and origin of semiotics, Lucian of Samosata and Saint Augustine of Hippo intersect in a debate upon ideas which can be used here as a preamble to the semiological approach to dancing. Their viewpoints are related to the epoch and environment in which they were expressed. They oscillate between semiotics, a (proto)aesthetics of reception and — in Augustine's case — morals. Lucian analyses dance without preconceived ideas and neither his commentaries nor

his pieces of advice derive from a specific ideological pattern. In contrast, the semio-aesthetics of dance, initiated by Augustine, is grounded in the theologian's hostility towards it. Lucian is more conciliatory in his comments and among a dancer's talents, he admired the science of imitation, which should render into gestures and postures the beauty of the body and the "harmony" of human nature (see Lucian, "Of Pantomime"). For Lucian the dancer is expected to show by means of gestures even the meaning of those songs accompanying him. His/her gestures should necessarily be "clear" and communicated by themselves, without someone else's interpretation.

Augustine distinguishes two categories of signs: imitative and conventional ones. Concerning the former, he postulated that no one can be deceived when observing similarity so as not to understand what they make reference to (Book 2, 53). However, conventional signs do not have a meaning in a natural way: they possess a certain signifying value only because their users have reached an agreement concerning it. In particular, Augustine refers to dance performances in Carthage, which could be seen on theatrical stages in late antiquity (see Book 2, 53). For Lucian, the meaning of dance is — or should be — directly clear. For Augustine, on the contrary, dance is based on convention and no meaning arises without it. This is the only explanation for the audience's difficulty to understand what happens on stage. More generally, "the theatrical frame" is the product of a set of "transactional and interactional conventions" "governing the participants' expectations and their understanding of the kinds of reality involved in the performance" (Elam 79; see also Farnell 115). Verisimilitude, authenticity, and iconic similarity — fundamental relations for the theatrical (re)presentation and for its "reality effect" (Barthes) — are also established rather depending on cultural conventions than on the real, natural model of performance: "Given the crucial importance of conventional rules at the levels of transaction and of interaction, it is clear that the verisimilitude or authenticity of the representation is not determined by 'iconic' fidelity alone but by what is sanctioned by the established performance canons. In general terms, verisimilitude may be defined as that which is rendered 'natural' by the theatrical frame (but which to any observer uninitiated in the code rules is liable to appear merely baffling: the authenticity of a Kabuki representation is more or less inaccessible to the average Western spectator). Verisimilitude, as Tzvetan Todorov has said, 'is the mask which conceals the text's own laws and which we are supposed to take for a relation with reality'" (Elam 83).

To Augustine, when compared to iconic signs in plastic arts — which are imperatively similar to the object — the degree of motivation of choreographic signs seems to be more reduced, quasi-inexistent: "in the case of pictures and statues and other such representations, especially those made by experienced artists, nobody who sees the representation fails to recognize the things which they resemble" (53) while dance rests necessarily on "agreement." Peirce's trichotomous view of signs (icon, index, symbol) converges with that in of Augustine's point of view about dance performances in that they are categories with a solely theoretical existence, but in practice their features merge in different proportions. For instance, the choreographic icon carries out a symbolic (i.e., conventional) function. The correspondence between icon and its object is apparently spontaneous, "natural." In fact, as Augustine observed, it is imposed by "custom" termed "habit" by Peirce or "approved by convention" according to de Saussure: everyone looks for a certain attitude in the signifying process, namely that those signs should be, as much as possible, similar to the objects they signify, but because one thing can be similar to another in many ways, these signs are not generally understood unless accompanied by agreement" (Augustine, Book 2, 53). This consensus is materialized in usage in certain conveniences or collective representational customs.

Lucian's and Augustine's thought in semiotics — the former in a positive and the latter in a negative context — highlights two types of semiotic discourse related to choreographic expression and, associated with it, two modes of reception. In Lucian's view, dance conveys and mimics habits and passions while for Augustine dance is ambiguous or even obscure, and as an argument he uses the indispensable presence of a commentator who witnesses the performances in the theatres of Carthage. Under the circumstances, the role of this commenter is explanatory, hermeneutic, and metadiscursive: he was supposed to clarify the hidden meanings of the dances performed on stage.

Possessing knowledge and abilities shared with the public, the commentator in Carthage was the forerunner of the contemporary "reviewer" of film, theatre, or dance. The commentator was the one to whom the audience entrusted the preservation of meaning. The function of the reviewer confirmed to Augustine that the signification of performance is established and functions in a social context. It is also consensual and not given "naturally": "if the signs made by actors while dancing were naturally meaningful, rather than meaningful as a result of human institution and agreement, an announcer would not have indicated to the Carthaginians, as each actor danced, what the dance meant, as he did in earlier days. Many old men still remember this, and we often hear them talking about it. It is quite credible, for even now if a person unfamiliar with these frivolities goes to the theatre his rapt attention to them is pointless unless someone tells him what the movements mean" (Book 2, 53).

In this way, Augustine defines dance, indirectly, as a quasi-esoteric code, accessible only to people with certain knowledge and instruction. The commentator mediates the actualization of meanings, he is the keeper and advocate of an "institutionalized" interpretive tradition. The commentator's function is explanatory, but also normative. It consists on the actualization of the semantic charge present within the stock of representation, that is, only those values adequate to the co(n)text. Such a role of the commentator/reviewer highlights the inherent and perennial "dependency between the understanding of visual images, textuality and narrativity" as an indicative of "multimodal" construction of sense (López-Varela Azcárate 7; see also Chapple and Kattenbelt). Besides its iconic (based on similarity) and symbolic (relying on convention) functions, dance has also a symptom dimension of inner life. So that for John Locke — mentioned in several eighteenth-century dance manuals (Engelhardt 35) and maintaining that knowledge is determined only by experience derived from sense perception — dancing is an important part of a humanity's education and a way to discover and express one's self. As a result, in nineteenth-century English novels, for instance in of Jane Austen's, dance is an indicator of social codes — governing gender and class behaviors — as well as symptomatic expressions of a person's interiority. "Reading" the dance and the outer body as a "text" requires more than relying on pre-established conventions. In Austen's novels this is a frequent exercise of interpreting the ballroom as a social and psychomoral scene (see Engelhardt). In this case, "the manner of reading" (Engelhardt 24) depends on "the multi-dimensional nature of movement, in contrast to the linear nature of spoken language" (Farnell 114).

"Clearness," as a semantic norm of the choreographic sign and as commented on by Lucian and Augustine, threatens especially its "poetic" dimension: rooted in an aesthetically fertile "ambiguity", as Roman Jakobson observes, it is capable of carrying, by means of the signifier's economy, the most advantageous signified value. Choreographic expression is heterogeneous: a collection of (sub)codes based on some "conventions" which vary from one society to another. Significations impress the spirit according to the convention in each society (Augustine, Book 2, 53). Conventions are varied, so "impressions" are also varied. Different choreographic codes reveal the kinetic potential of the body differently and its ability to render an expressive image of the world and the human being. As particular language(s), the dance brings forth a semantic universe, deeply seated in a subjective experience. In fact, the limits of the language are the limits of the world, in a personal and multiple one (see Wittgenstein 5.6).

Roger Caillois mentions mimetic games among the four fundamental types of human play: *agôn* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation), and *ilinx* (vertigo) (131-40). Iconic elements can also be found in magic and religious practices. By a similarity (or iconicity) criterion, Curt Sachs distinguished two types of dances: "figurative" and "nonfigurative" (Sachs qtd. in Wallis 484). In the former category we find dances which imitate animal postures and agricultural labor. In Dionysiac masculine dances — portrayed on ceramics of antiquity — mimetics, obscene gestures, and motion are performed and motivated iconicity occurs in *tratta*, a popular Greek dance (see Delavaud-Roux, *Les Danses dionysiaques*). Alternatively, there are steps forward and backward, hence evoking the to-and-fro movement of waves. For the ancient Greeks, some dances imitated animals: the owl (*skôpos*) or the barn owl (*glaux*) while others reveal human types and behavior; for instance, *gypones*,

reminding of old men propped up on their sticks. Or, the evocative nature of the tango can justify its position in the category of "iconic" dances.

There are liberties and constraints in the representation of iconic relations. Ritual iconicity, which follows cultural traditions, is considered beneficial by its practitioners; otherwise, there is the fear that it can have undesired consequences. In antique thought, there was an essential solidarity between the name and its bearer and in some cultures iconicity is the foundation of the religious system and of veneration: the idol, an iconic sign, is a manifestation of sacredness. In others, the iconic representation of divinity is forbidden, for instance in Judaism or Islam. Or, North American Indians invoked the bison by ritual dancing (imitative), before going hunting. On the other hand, drawing the game by a non-Native signaled misfortune (see Wallis 496; see also Rubinelli and Cantoni 348). Among the dances making use of weapons, three Greek ones can be distinguished: the dance of the Kuretes, of the Korybantes, and of the Amazons of Ephesus. Each of them is connected to a foundational myth and at least three elements (circularity, leaps, and weapon handling) are "motivated" mythically: "within the god welcoming courtyard, the tripping Corybants would surround Dionysos with their child-cherishing dance, and clash their swords and strike their shields with rebounding steel in alternate movements, to conceal the growing boyhood of Dionysos" (Nonnos 9, 315). Concerning the ritualistic dance of the Amazons of Ephesus, one of Callimac's comments is useful: "Hippo fulfilled her rites and the Amazons danced around the idol the dance of weapons, the dance of shields, then the group spread into a circle; the shrill and light sound of the *Syrinx* guided their steps, so that these would hit the ground all at the same time ... Their feet stumped noisily and their drums resounded" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) ("Hippo accomplit les rites, et les Amazones, Reine Oupis, autour de l'idole firent la danse armée, la danse des boucliers, puis en cercle déroulèrent leur large choeur; le chant aigu et léger de la syrx soutenait leurs pas pour, d'accord, frapper la terre. Et les pieds claquaient un bruit pressé, et les carquois retentissaient" [240]).

Not only the dance figure can be motivated, but its props too: garments, jewelry, and distinctive marks. In some rituals, the dancer's garment — a symbolic icon — reminds of such as that of the archetypal god or hero. In a tribe in New Guinea, there was the belief that — if the chieftain went out to sea — he embodied the mythical hero Aori. Every item of his apparel such as his majestic movement or inaction, the garment, the hair jewel, the mask (the blackened face) evokes the archetype (see Eliade). In the Amerindian Buffalo Dance, the ritual costume — bison skin — evokes the desired game. The dance is a sort of "drama" or rather "pantomime" which presents the game and what happens to it once it gets into the Indians' hands (see Lévy-Bruhl 12). The same happens during the bear's dance in the case of Sioux nations. A similar case is that of dances previous to fishing (Lévy-Bruhl 18). Ritual mimetism, as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl remarks, derives from a well-rooted pattern of "prelogical" mentality: the image is consubstantial with the original and vice versa (13). The possession of the image entails to make ready for taking possession over the original. The mystical or mythical value of the icon is correlated to the practices of sympathetic magic, based on the "law of contagion" between the sign and its object (Lévy-Bruhl 17). The Kera Maria dance in the Macedonian village of Alexandria is performed by women wearing a sort of helmet on their heads and they get outfitted in this manner as a reminder of a battle from the Hellenistic period (see Delavaud-Roux, *Les Danses armées* 178). Thus their attire celebrates a victory they contributed to, according to their historical traditions. Another explanation is that the head-cover is an apotropaic symbol and the semantic value is, in this case, connected to the pragmatic nature of the ritual efficiency. The Kuretes' equipment (helmet, shield, and sword) is motivated by the referential context: a myth reenacted by means of the ritual choreography. According to a Cretan myth, the Kuretes, owing to the noise of their weapons and steps, protected the new-born Zeus from his father's wrath, namely Cronos, who was ready to devour him.

The choreographic image combines in various proportions the aesthetic value and the informative one (see, e.g., Eco; Wallis): "most of our movement accomplishes some objective; it gets us some

place or accomplishes a task. Generally dance movement does not, especially theatre dance. Rather its values are not utilitarian or practical; they are affective or aesthetic. In terms of human movement, aesthetic intent implicates intrinsic values which inhere in actions, be they appreciated for their beauty or for some other affective quality" (Fraleigh 141). The aesthetic message is absolutely connotative and the icon signifies, even if its object does not exist in reality (see Peirce 239, 252). It informs about the natural/objective world or about the virtual/subjective one, about a real referent or about a psychic-mental one. The choreographer tends to transform the empirical nature of phenomena and give it an unusual configuration; artistic images are not directly perceived or reproduced, but subjectively recreated (see, e.g., Peirce; Hoffmann). This means that the "poetic" function takes precedence over the referential function without leading to the disappearance of the reference/denotation, since it only makes it ambiguous, which is aesthetically valid. Ambiguity remains an intrinsic and inherent property of the poetic message (see, e.g., Jakobson; Jordan and Thomas). Thus, the choreographic icon is both suggestive and ambiguous and at any moment any actualized semantic value overshadows the others associated to the same sign, but without suppressing them. The informative or referential value of choreographic signs is inevitably obscured by activities of selection, simplification, interpretation (see Wallis 492). The choreographic sign has as an object a real referent or a mental representation, and a choreographic icon is also the possible "interpretant" of another sign, a semiotic process theoretically unlimited: "anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*. No doubt, intelligent consciousness must enter into the series. If the series of successive interpretants comes to an end, the sign is thereby rendered imperfect, at least" (Peirce 239).

Based on the above, my question is how to establish a sense of dance and so as a particular semiosis? According to de Saussure's semiology, semiosis is ensured by a cultural system of conventions and given as such to the user. In fact, this only occurs if the choreographic signs are strictly encoded, such as in magic, ritual, or religious expressions encoded in dancing. As for the rest, the Peirce's point of view is applicable: the role of "intelligent consciousness" is crucial for the engendering of signification and of interpretants (239). In the sense of Peirce, the choreographer interprets the world. His/her signs are "interpretants" in primary semiosis. This subjective perspective is the Peircean "intelligent consciousness" and its object is related to what Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Rudolf Laban call "kinetic thinking" (*pensée motrice*): "the image or interior sensation perceived by the creator before its materialization is not an image as an illustration, but it acquires the meaning of shaping a lived or imagined experience" (Robinson 79) and this "interior" image or sensation is "the motivational source" of dance whereby "the dancer deals not just with movement but with the motivational source, idea, or metaphor behind the movement, that which the movement will bring to mind" (Robinson 79). Even if the dance is stylistically abstract, it will draw our attention to its unique unfolding of movement patterns in space-time. Movement patterns are also images and "they impress the imagination, as the word 'image' implies" (Fraleigh 141). By virtue of an "interpretant" and by means of selection, simplification, and interpretation the choreographic sign reveals its object. This process is related to abstraction (see, e.g., Peirce 25-27, 259; Robinson 79), which is inherent to the embodiment of any formal structure. In the context of the performance, Patrice Pavis names "embodiment" the special actor's relation with his/her role, and "disembodiment," the "abstraction necessary to any signification process" (140). Reducing experience to its essential nature, these modes of "abstraction" are rooted in the choreographer's view(s). Jacqueline Robinson elaborated on abstraction as a means of choreographic creation, but for Peirce "abstractive observation" is the specific mode of manifestation for any intelligence which is capable of learning by means of experience. For instance, the "semasiological body" is a "model" "accepted as a theoretical 'given'," "a structure for making finite all the possible moves a body can make: like all theoretical structures, it is a way of making sense out of empirical data" (Farnell 114; see also Zellinger). Different parts of the body act as some "metonymic" actors (see Greimas), identified by both natural and cultural criteria,

and integrated by the polyphonic choreographic discourse so that dance composition syntax and the semio-morphological disarticulation of the body complement each other. By criteria of expressiveness, modern and contemporary choreographers attempt to reevaluate some body segments ignored or refused by classical ballet codified according to esthetical "rules" of seventeenth-century codes of elegance. Nowadays, "physical theater" (see Leabhart) — based on the actor's body rather than the text — converges with the dance, without being identical with it (see Pavis 181-208). Somehow, the symptomatic function of the body and its movement can explain the preference of directors for this experimental genre of theater genre. Acting as a particular configuration of the time-space-energy system, on which choreographic expression essentially depends, the rhythmical patterns and codes are also the result of an "abstractive observation" (see, e.g., Fontanille; Laban).

Somehow, abstraction is related to demotivation. Paradoxically, demotivation results from repetitiveness of motivation itself (see Marcus 73). So, the degree of abstraction of a choreographic sign can be assessed "by virtue of the length of the chain of successive motivations which links it to its initial motivation" (Marcus 74). Moreover, all the motivated signs are involved in an irreversible change that turns them into symbolic signs (see Marcus 73-74). Rudolf Laban confirms the inevitability of the abstractive transformation process of choreographic signs (124). For instance, figures in classical ballet have lost the original significations of actions rooted within them, although they preserve an expressive relatedness to them, in that they "symbolize" the same deep passions, but without "signifying" them (Laban 124]). In other words, on the course of the abstractive "chain", a given signification at a certain moment is a dim ("symbolic") echo of the initial signification. Thus, the choreographic sign involves its (re)semantization in the particular context of each choreographic composition. This doubles the abstractive process of demotivation.

The choreographic sign constitutes itself as a deviation, a rhetoric *écart* from the common kinetic manifestations. This is owing to its suggestive reorganization or distortion by way of exaggeration or idealization (see Robinson 79). Such deviation means an emphatic exploitation of a manifest appearance determined not by the intention to reproduce the model, but by that of signifying a function or one of its aspect (see Lévi-Strauss). Each style has its own distortion modes. For instance, the five figures of classical ballet and Duncan's *à l'ancienne* manner of dance: body in movement, freed from the constraints of dance props and from the stereotypes of academic movement. Similar are the styles of Indian classical dance with the codified movement of major peripheries *anga* and of minor peripheries *upanga* and its syntax lying at the roots of canonical structures such as *chari*, *karana*, *khanda*, *mandala*, *pindibandha*: Indian classical theory distinguishes four types of *vrittis*, or four ways in which the movement can be "stylized." These are *kaiseki* (the "gracious" mode or style), *arbhati* (the "energetic" style), *satavati* (the "stately" style), and *bharati* (verbal representation, which is rarely employed in dance) (see Vatsyayan 7). Further, these particular stylizations are present in a number of Indian schools: *Bharatanatyam*, *Kathakali*, *Manipuri*, *Orissi*; *Kathakali* is individualized by means of a few choreographic elements involving the skeletal system and the face muscles (see Vatsyayan 27-28).

The cooperation of mimetic practices and suggestive/evocative ones lies at the heart of classical Indian dances, whose principles are also organized around classical drama (see Vatsyayan 12-13). There are three basic principles: the principle of representation modes (*dharmis*), the principle of styles (*vrittis*), and of the four types of interpretation (*abhinaya*). The first one subsumes two aspects: the realistic mode, employed in drama itself, and the stylized mode, occasionally used in drama and particularly in dance. By means of hand movements, we can represent and, thus, understand the universe (Vatsyayan 6-7). In *natyadharmi*, the suggestion principle dominates, and not the imitation one. Stylization is inevitable, as long as events, experiences, and emotions call for gestural expression. In *natyadharmi*, even tears are expressed by way of gestures rather than by mimicking real crying. Hand movements bring into focus the choreo-dramatic expression. The distinction between purely imitative movements and suggestive movements can be related to the opposition between the informative or referential and the suggestive or evocative function (see Vatsyayan 12). In

India, dance is genetically and thematically connected to the other arts, and takes different forms: pure dance (*nritya*), dramatic dance (*natya*), and gesticulation performed with musical accompaniment, also assisted by sung words (*nritya*). This shows that in classical Indian dance, the criterion of iconicity enables the identification of two types of discourse: on the one hand, *natya* and *nritya* and, on the other hand, *nritya*. Regularly, dance is accompanied by mimic and gesticulation termed *angika-abhinaya*. Pure dance (*nritya*) is non-mimetic and sculptural, that is a group of highly stylized symbolic postures. Therefore, *nritya* is not only a strategy for rendering rhythm (*tala*) by means of movements lacking theatrical-mimetic signification; it also projects "specific positions in a given rhythmic cycle" (Vatsyayan 8) This distinction between pure non-mimetic dance (*nritya*) and imitative-theatrical dance (*abhinaya*) can also be found in ancient Greek dance, albeit this has not been theorized systematically.

Each technique of dance prescribes the way in which the features of an object are best revealed and the same prototype can be reflected in countless representations which are equally valid (see Arnheim). For instance, Mary Wigman's style unveils, to a great degree, the choreographic design of space; Martha Graham shows a tense polarity between slackness and relaxation; Doris Humphrey employs mostly the opposition equilibrium/imbalance, fall/rebound. In the case of ancient dances, Marie-Hélène Delavaud-Roux identifies a certain type of mannerism defining the masculine Dionysiac dance, performed by *Kômastes* and satyrs, as shown in ceramic ornaments dating from the latter half of the fifth-century BC. Mannerism is, in this case, a special form of "stylization" (Delavaud-Roux, *Les Danses dionysiaques* 111) or abstraction.

In conclusion, although it has characteristics of signal and symptom, human dance also entails symbolic qualities derived from its embedding in some cultural codes. It reveals a process specific to human semiosis: the "culturalization" of the natural or the motivated. Dance is a special expression and characteristic of human behavior. Dancing codes try to fix the spontaneity, the "naturalness" of movements and feelings within a foreseeable and repeatable system of expression. In such a code — or body language — the flashing of life and emotion is taking shape. Dance involves a special form of "stylization" or abstraction and of codification. Primary emotionality related to pre-conscious or unconscious feeling can be exteriorized by way of spontaneous gestures, which are subsumed to the index and the symptom: although lacking in intentional action, these can signify. So that dance has a symptom dimension of the subjective experience, an interior image or sensation is often its source and motivation. Dancing movement is also an intersection point of various codes, such as social, esthetical, (re)presentational, theatrical, and choreographic ones and thereby it acquires a symbolic character as a partially objectivated and conventionalized expression structure. The rhythmical patterns and codes are also the result of an abstraction. The metadiscursive function of the dance viewer — i.e., the construction of meaning — suggests that the signification of performance is established in a social context and it is not given "naturally." In magic, ritual, or religious manifestations, choreographic signs are usually strictly encoded and semiosis is given to the user while for other choreographic expressions the role of "intelligent consciousness" is crucial for the engendering of signification. The choreographer "interprets" the world and those present "interpret" in their turn the choreographic discourse. Images of dance combine in various proportions aesthetic values and informative messages. They have a real referent or a mental representation and a choreographic sign is also the possible "interpretant" of another sign, a semiotic process theoretically unlimited. By means of selection, simplification, and interpretation the choreographic sign reveals its object. This process pertains to abstraction which is related, in turn, to demotivation; that is, all motivated signs are involved in an irreversible change that turns them into symbolic signs. The choreographic sign involves its (re)semantization in the particular context of each choreographic composition. The choreographic sign constitutes itself as a deviation from the common kinetic manifestations. This is an emphatic exploitation of a manifest appearance determined not by the intention to reproduce the model, but by that of signifying a function or one of its aspects. Dance is a particular configuration of the time-space-energy system and in contrast to the linear nature of

spoken language the nature of movement and body language is a multi-dimensional expression.

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